Washington State
Department of Transportation

July 2009

Communications Manual

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Washington State
Department of Transportation

Dear Reader,

It is my pleasure to present the WSDOT Communications Manual for your use. This manual represents several years of effort developing the look, feel and sound of WSDOT's brand. We have come a long way in our quest to be an agency that speaks with consistent, open and honest communications – the OneDOT way.

This manual is intended to help you meet or exceed our goal to provide relevant, accurate, clear and consistent information that conveys our key messages and serves the public's need for knowledge about our program and project delivery activities.

In addition to information on our overall communications philosophy, this manual also provides specific guidance for written, Web, graphic and media communication products. Individual sections give guidelines and instruction for using these tools.

Everyone working on WSDOT projects and programs, whether a consultant, contractor or a WSDOT employee, is expected to meet or exceed the communications standards described in this manual.

We also regard every WSDOT employee as an everyday ambassador for our agency, its work and our fellow employees. We expect that all of our employees will share what they know about their jobs, their programs and their agency with neighbors, friends and family. That doesn't mean everyone should write news releases. But we need to understand, advance and promote the three key elements of our mantra – project delivery, accountability and communications.

Please use this manual in every way you can to support and strengthen your own and your colleagues' work in carrying out our communications mission.

Sincerely,

Paula J. Hammond
Secretary of Transportation

We shall stress the importance of sharing clear, concise and timely information with WSDOT employees, elected officials, community leaders, businesses, citizens and taxpayers, others in the transportation community, with the press and other media. We shall strive for the effectiveness of all our employees in meeting WSDOT's communications standards.

Excerpt from
WSDOT's Mission Statement and Management Principles

WSDOT Communications Manual
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Washington State
Department of Transportation

WSDOT Communications Manual

The WSDOT Communications Manual is designed to help WSDOT staff and contractors communicate effectively with the public. Those working on WSDOT projects, whether they are state workers or contractors, are expected to meet or exceed these standards for public communication.

The manual provides information on the overall communications philosophy at WSDOT. It also provides more specific background for written documents, Web pages, graphics and media relations. Each section provides guidance to help you incorporate these approaches into your work.

Our ultimate goal is to reinforce WSDOT's brand by providing information that is relevant, accurate, consistent and strategic. WSDOT's communications tools and standards are subject to periodic review and change to better meet the needs of the public.

Please contact WSDOT communications staff members for updates to standards and information.

Visit the WSDOT communications office online at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/communications

Chapter 1

WSDOT Communications Overview

The Washington State Department of Transportation has a strong brand, built on a dogged focus on project delivery, accountability and good communications.

It's not by accident that WSDOT's brand is strong. The emphasis on quality, strategic communications by all levels of management and staff is a major contributor to our success. Our brand-building effort has resulted in a dramatic shift in public policy, public trust, and ultimately, a significant public benefit.

There are a few obvious differences between a public agency and a private company when it comes to brand building, namely their primary motivation – the bottom line.

Any business student can talk at length about the value of a strong brand to a company's bottom line. A strong brand contributes to growth in revenues and profits and helps attract new customers, which does not seem particularly relevant to a government agency. Yet, government agencies will find great value in earning public trust and confidence, which often translate into tax dollars for programs and projects.

For WSDOT the bottom line is an improved transportation system that adds value to everyone's quality of life. Safer roads mean fewer injuries and deaths. Less congestion improves air quality, boosts the economy by making it easier to deliver freight, gets workers where they're needed and increases the time available for people to spend with their families.

"We also regard every WSDOT employee as an everyday ambassador for our agency, its work and our fellow employees. We expect that all of our employees will share what they know about their jobs, their programs and their agency with neighbors, friends and family..."

- Paula Hammond

WSDOT sees the world from the users' perspective. Projects and programs are described from the perspective of the motorist, ferry rider or carpooler.

What is a brand?

To paraphrase Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, "We know it when we see it."

Nike. Starbucks. Costco. Boeing. Microsoft.

Is it the name? The logo? In part. A brand is an organization's reputation; it's everything people know, think, feel, believe and associate with the organization and its products and services. It's the culmination of every interaction an organization has with the public and it relies greatly on perception.

A brand – especially a public-sector brand – must be consistent.

Everything that is the WSDOT brand can be found in its underlying principles of conduct; accountability, project delivery and benefits, and communication. The brand is supported by the agency name and logo and is strengthened by the commitment of WSDOT employees to apply the agency's underlying principals of conduct to their daily work.

The following sections will attempt to provide specific examples of WSDOT's communications expectations – how should the public see and interact with the agency? We'll use real-world case studies to illustrate how our commitment to WSDOT's core branding principles has worked to shape perception of the agency, and ultimately, benefit our state.

What is the WSDOT brand?

OneDOT. We share a set of underlying principals of conduct that guide our work and reinforce our brand identity: we deliver projects and services, we are accountable and we talk about what we do. In addition, we are identified by a single basic logo and the use of a specific shade of green.

WSDOT is a can-do agency

WSDOT staff are problem solvers. However, we sometimes can't meet the expectations of every customer due to limited resources, conflicting public opinions and interests, legal constraints or other limitations. When possible, we should work to develop mutually agreeable solutions and demonstrate how we incorporate customer input. If we can't meet public expectations, we should explain why not and give workable alternatives.

WSDOT cares, is customer-focused and provides two-way communications

WSDOT staff maximize opportunities to listen to our customers and employees and cares about what those customers and employees say. Early input in project development is welcomed. WSDOT staff listen to concerns, address them when developing policies or projects and communicate how we are responding to customer needs. We address concerns at public meetings through correspondence, by phone, via e-mail or on our Web pages. Providing an open communications environment fosters trust and teamwork, which in turn, maintains and improves public confidence.

No surprises

WSDOT is the first and best source of information about the agency whether the news is good or bad. We provide accurate, timely, complete and open communications on issues for which it is responsible. We take the initiative to provide information about current programs, projects and policies. Public information is not a moving target and we strive to provide accurate information the first time.

Manage expectations

WSDOT tells the whole story. Building and maintaining transportation systems is not easy. When people understand the challenges, trade-offs and limitations we face, they are better able to understand our decisions and the resulting consequences. Sharing successes and admitting shortcomings boosts our credibility and helps foster understanding of the difficult decisions we make.

Strategic communicators

In addition to project information, WSDOT looks for opportunities to communicate policy, budget or other big-picture information. WSDOT communications staff are available to help WSDOT employees or consultants incorporate agency-wide messages into their work.

Retail communications

WSDOT speaks directly to customers whenever possible. Communications are tailored to individuals and their questions. Communications is a team effort that requires all WSDOT employees, our contractors and consultants to effectively deliver messages to the public in order to be successful. Each interaction with the public is treated as an opportunity to enhance our credibility.

WSDOT staff members, our contractors and consultants are ambassadors to the communities in which they live and work. Each has a responsibility to effectively communicate WSDOT programs, projects and policies to those who ask.

Good To Go!
WSDOT
STATE ROUTE 167
SPRING 2008
HOT-LNS
PILOT PROJECT

Take every opportunity to position the agency in the mind of the public to build the relationship of trust. Understand what the public wants, what it values and build on this perception.

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WASHINGTON
JOBS
NOW

WSDOT's key messages tell the public that:

- ***WSDOT projects provide real benefits to drivers and our economy.***
- ***WSDOT delivers projects.***
- ***WSDOT is accountable (We spend your money wisely).***

Messaging

Coordinated messages and tools

Although WSDOT's communications are decentralized throughout the state, there is just one DOT and messages and use of technology are coordinated. Consistent information is available to WSDOT customers regardless of the source used to find it.

Key messaging

The who, what, when, where, why and how of WSDOT's projects, services and programs can be woven with key messages to tell our story.

WSDOT's key messages tell the public that:

- WSDOT projects provide real benefits to commuters and our economy.
- WSDOT delivers projects.
- WSDOT is accountable (We spend your money wisely).

When possible, offer specific examples to illustrate our key messages. The public needs to know when the lanes will be closed for construction, but also needs to know why construction benefits them.

Many facts about WSDOT's work can be examples of successes. Following are sample messages tailored for specific public-information campaigns:

- All drivers will benefit from the safety improvements.
- The Cayuse Pass was opened two weeks ahead of schedule.
- The Incident Response Program is another effort to find new ways to reduce delay caused by blocking accidents.
- Commute trip reduction programs helped CH2M Hill in Bellevue save $73,000 through its parking management program.

How can you support the WSDOT brand?

Take every opportunity to position the agency as trustworthy in the mind of the public. Understand what the public wants, what it values and build on this perception. Identify branding opportunities where you and WSDOT interface with the public. Take that opportunity to communicate a strong WSDOT brand.

Some opportunities to communicate the WSDOT brand to the public include:

- Web pages
- Publications
- E-mail
- Direct mail
- Forms
- Media contacts
- Twitter
- Signs
- Networking
- Presentations
- Telephone conversations
- Business cards
- Blog

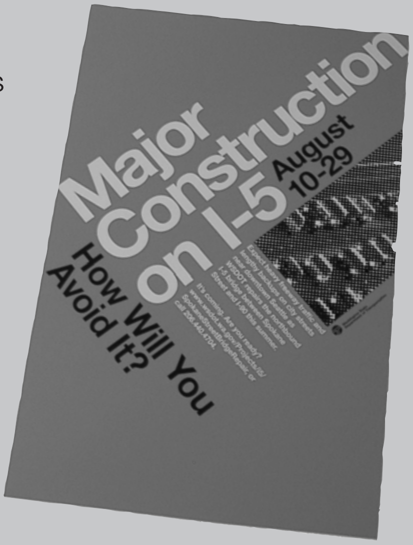
Case studies – lane closures

I-5 Seattle Bridge Repair

In the summer of 2007, a WSDOT project team needed to close lanes of northbound I-5 just south of downtown Seattle for up to 19 days for a major pavement repair and expansion joint replacement project. These lane closures occurred around the clock, including workdays, on one of the busiest stretches of freeway in the state. To avoid gridlock, we needed more than half of the typical 110,000 drivers who use this stretch of freeway daily to use alternate routes, carpool, ride transit or simply stay away.

WSDOT clearly wanted to warn the public that delays were expected and to enlist the public to help. In situations like these, WSDOT communications teams highlight three specific things:

- What is the situation?
- What is WSDOT doing?
- What can drivers or the general public do in response?

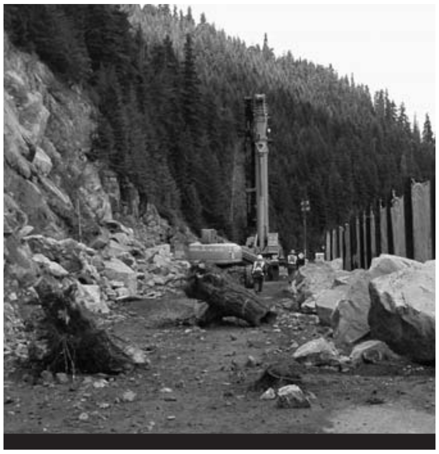


The WSDOT communication team used early and extensive outreach including media relations, real-time Web page updates, e-mail alerts and ongoing face-to-face community outreach.

Thanks to help from drivers, transit agencies, businesses and local jurisdictions, the results were an impressive 50 percent drop in traffic through the work zone and minimal traffic delays, even on alternate routes.

(Case studies continued next page)

Crews work around the clock to complete the repairs on the I-5 Seattle Bridge.



Rock slide work on I-90 Snoqualmie Pass, Winter 2005.

I-90 Snoqualmie Pass

A tragic rockslide onto I-90 in November 2005 killed two young women driving across Snoqualmie Pass. WSDOT and its contractor worked hard to quickly identify what needed to be done to shore up the area.

The repairs required closing travel lanes and reducing the speed limit across Washington's main east-west travel route. The lane restrictions would be in place throughout the heavily traveled Thanksgiving holiday period.

Again, WSDOT approached the challenge by explaining the situation, what WSDOT was doing about it and what the public could do in response.

With the lanes restricted, WSDOT traffic engineers worried that a worst-case scenario of 30-mile back ups could emerge – possibly in the region's poorest winter weather conditions. WSDOT's contractor was going to work through the holiday and, again, WSDOT was going to assist motorists with up-to-the-minute traffic conditions on the pass. But motorists needed to do their part – avoid the area, travel late or early or don't travel at all.

Like the previous Seattle example, travelers heard the call and responded. Four things needed to happen (and ultimately did happen) to avoid holiday weekend traffic delays:

1. The weather cooperated; not too much snow fell (only two or three inches at the work zone).
2. Travelers avoided the peak hours by traveling earlier or later than the previous year.
3. People took alternate routes, Stevens Pass and White Pass, to get to their destinations (traffic increase of 52 percent on Stevens and an increase of 86 percent on White Pass compared to 2004).
4. Some people postponed travel that week (15 percent fewer vehicles crossed the Cascades compared to the previous year).

So to what can WSDOT attribute the significant public response to its call to action? WSDOT has built a reputation for credibility when it comes to notifying the public about traffic conditions. There is no doubt that WSDOT's credibility was built upon the solid work of WSDOT's contractors, project office teams, design teams, maintenance crews and others.

Case study – I-405 to SR 167

In 2005, WSDOT opened a new ramp from I-405 southbound to SR 167 southbound. It separated traffic headed for Renton from traffic headed south on SR 167. The primary purpose was to reduce side-swipe collisions with the added benefit of reducing related backups.

Within days of opening the media called asking for an update on the success, but WSDOT wouldn't have official statistics for at least six months when the first evaluation was due. But the reporters didn't want to know that level of detail. They just wanted to know if drivers were having a different – better – experience driving through this notorious bottleneck. So WSDOT sent out several staff to drive it during different times of day and called people they knew who were regular users. By collecting this informal data, WSDOT was able to tell the reporters that people were saving time and traffic was flowing better. The agency also referred the reporters to some of the community contacts for direct quotes, thus adding credibility.

Chapter 2

Communications Planning

Know your audience

In addition to understanding WSDOT's communications expectations, you must know your audience in order to successfully communicate. After all, aspects of successful communications include anticipating your audience's needs and listening.

Regardless of the medium you are using, it is critical that you speak to and write for your audience from their perspective.

- Who is your reader?
- What does your reader know about WSDOT?
- What do you want your reader to know?
- How can you fill the knowledge gaps?

Who is your target audience?

Clearly list and identify your primary target audience and use as much detail as possible. List secondary and tertiary audiences as needed, but show restraint.

- **Policy makers in my county** –They are concerned about taxes, healthcare for seniors and economic development. They are between the ages of 40 and 70. More are female than male. They have a college degree–some have advanced degrees. They read local and national newspapers and magazines like U.S. News and World Report, The Wall Street Journal and The Spokesman-Review. They watch top-rated television programs like *Friends* and *Monday Night Football* and tune into news and talk-radio, frequently.
- **People who live within the greater Aberdeen area** –There are a significant number of retired seniors and lots of families with children. Transit isn't on their radar screen at all. They're more concerned about jobs, the local economy, schools and public safety. They tend to listen to country and pop music and watch mainstream TV like *Friends*, *Oprah* and *Crime Scene Investigations*. They're concerned about taxes and their pocketbook, but they also show compassion and a willingness to invest in things that they feel are very important, like schools.

It's more and more important for communication efforts to clearly identify opportunities to measure success. Every communication plan, regardless of format or style, should include a section on measurement.

What is the main message you plan to communicate?

Use Plain Talk language. Keep your key message simple. You can list more than one key message, but try to reach consensus about which is top priority and keep the list of messages as short as possible. Select messages that will resonate with your audience(s). Put yourself in your target audience's shoes and ask "what's in it for me?" Use research to develop messages whenever possible. Answer the question "if there's only one thing people walk away knowing, what should that thing be?"

Why should the target audience believe this?

List supporting arguments. They should believe your messages because you're:

- Bringing this topic to their attention. They haven't really considered the subject before. The topic wasn't even on their radar screen.
- Providing data or other quantifiable proof.
- Showing how public comments and opinions and local groups shaped the proposal or program.
- Telling compelling anecdotal stories or showing compelling photos.

Is there anything else that's important?

- Lay it all on the table. Be honest and complete.
- Don't use royal blue because my boss hates it and he has to approve the project.
- Campaign must be complete by March 15.
- My budget is $50.
- Use both the WSDOT and Spokane Transit logo on all public materials.
- Include contact information, including websites, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers.
- Must look and feel like part of the Lewis County family of products.
- Must be approved by six project partners and the advisory committee.
- The public can only shape parts of the project, other parts are dictated by law/policy and are already decided.

Sample Plan - Project Milestone Communications Plan

Use the name of the project as your title, for example: Mukilteo SR 525 Expansion. If there are lots of documents published under the project name, consider adding the phrase *Communications Plan* to the title.

The first paragraph, without a heading, should outline the matter-of-fact *what* and *why* of the situation:

- Community name
- Highway name and number
- Common public description of place
- Traffic and environmental impacts
- Project purpose and public benefit

Sample

WSDOT will repair a slope above SR 203, commonly known as the Dairy Valley Parkway, between Duvall and Carnation. This will require an inconvenient detour that will be in place for much of the year. Local businesses will see reduced traffic and commuters and nearby residents will experience significant delays. While currently stable, the slope is a safety concern that needs to be addressed before the next earthquake or rainy season.

Objectives (definitions of success):

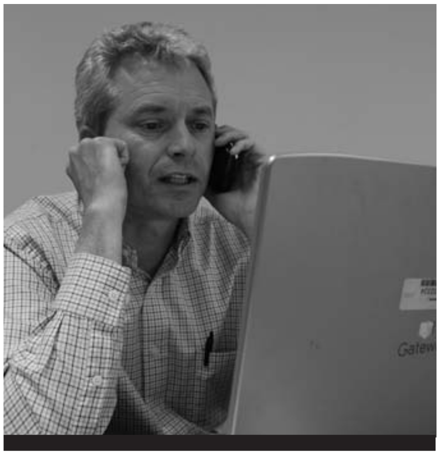
These should be clear and easily measured. What is the desired outcome of this communication plan? What are you trying to accomplish?

Samples:

- Commuters, shoppers, business owners, and nearby residents are aware of the project and its impacts and adjust their behavior to minimize the effect on their lives.
- Media coverage indicates that we've done what we can to minimize impacts on the community; that it's an important and worthwhile project; and that we're empathetic with those who are struggling with the inconvenience we've caused.
- We minimize the number of letters and phone calls we receive by providing the right information with the right tone to the right people at the right time.

Key dates:

February 21, 2003	Construction begins; detour begins
April 12 and 13, 2003	Weekend blasting; expect noise impacts
Summer 2003	Highway opens to one-way traffic
October 15, 2003	Ribbon cutting event, highway reopened
January 2004	Project complete



Select messages that will resonate with your audience(s). Put yourself in your target audience's shoes and ask "what's in it for me?"

WSDOT is the first and best source of information about the agency, whether the news is good or bad. We provide accurate, timely, complete and open communications on issues for which we are responsible.

Team members and affiliations

Barbara Jones, King County (206-555-2345)

Arthur Fielders, WSDOT Design (425-555-3456)

Steve Nicks, WSDOT Construction Traffic (360-555-4567)

Emily Thompson, WSDOT Public Affairs (206-555-5678)

Colleen Builder, WSDOT Project Office (425-555-6789)

Key message(s)

Limit your key messages to one, up to three. (No, you can't have five or six.) When developing your key message answer the question: "If there's one thing the media and public know about your project, what should it be?"

Your entire team should know the key messages. When talking to the public or a reporter it should be the first and last thing they mention.

Samples:

- Duvall and Carnation are still open for business.
- WSDOT is doing everything we can to keep traffic moving. Detours will be clearly marked to help drivers avoid the construction.
- We're taking an aggressive approach to this construction project. Traffic impacts will be significant, but short-lived. Overall, this approach will be less costly and disruptive for everyone.

Significant public relations risks

It is often helpful to identify and list the risks associated with communicating about a particular project or issue.

Other important information

List other important messages and background information. Include information about whether the project is on schedule and on budget. Anticipate information various target audiences will need.

Measurement

It's more and more important for communication efforts to clearly identify opportunities to measure success. Every communication plan, regardless of format or style, should include a section on measurement.

The best advice on measurement is to develop clear objectives. Get creative. Try to think of ways to capture success. For instance, if success is a number of trips not taken then work with the traffic office to install traffic counters before and after a project. If success is a broad community cross section participating in the process, then measure your work with specific groups representing various demographic populations.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The amount of effort required in developing the public-involvement plan should be proportional to both the size of the planning effort and the degree of controversy expected.

Developing a Communications Plan

A communications plan can be developed as one element in an overall public-involvement plan. A communications plan can stand alone. This plan focuses on a single communications objective, such as the opening of a new interchange or release of an environmental document.

The first place to begin is to clearly define the assignment or objective. What do you want to accomplish? Be as clear and focused as possible – expectations that are too broad will set you up for failure.

- Craft a plan to increase vanpool use by people who work in Tukwila.
- Draft a document outlining highway construction budgets, schedules, and issues for policy makers.
- Create a public-involvement plan to support an environmental impact statement for a proposed construction project on I-5.
- Increase awareness of Portland-Seattle-Vancouver, BC Amtrak *Cascades* service.
- Produce a communications plan to inform the public about expected congestion resulting from a series of planned highway maintenance projects and to encourage drivers to share the ride, ride the bus, change their schedule to avoid peak hour traffic, or use a detour route.

Developing a Public-Involvement Plan

Developing a well-thought-out public-involvement plan can be critical to the success of a transportation effort, be it a planning study, project or program. The public now scrutinizes almost everything the Washington State Department of Transportation does. The planning process, in particular, is of interest to concerned citizens. Three basic principles of public involvement are early, continuous and meaningful involvement. The public-involvement plan will focus on these principles.

The amount of effort required in developing the public-involvement plan should be proportional to both the size of the planning effort and the degree of controversy expected. It is advisable to check with local sources before deciding what the degree of controversy is likely to be. Some of the steps in this process are designed to answer that question.

For information go to:
wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/WritePublicPlan.htm

Chapter 3
Writing

Written branding

For WSDOT to truly be accountable we must clearly and simply provide information that the public wants and needs. How we write about our projects, services and programs is a key communication strategy that supports the agency brand. Here at WSDOT we call it reader-friendly writing or plain talk. Regardless of what you call it, we must write using everyday language, present information logically, compose short sentences, develop easy-to-read layout and design, and use active voice.

We all are well aware of the dry, over wrought technical document. WSDOT has shelves of these available for review in our library. WSDOT is working to improve the quality of all its documents and publications.

For instance, we are trying to make the results of technical analyses in our project-level environmental reviews more accessible to the average reader. We need our public documents to show how we propose to meet a transportation need while protecting and enhancing the surrounding land, water and communities. By applying plain talk techniques, we are able to build environmental assessments and environmental impact statements that help build public trust and reduce frustration with oversize and overly complex documents. Great examples of this effort can be found in the nationally recognized Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (found online at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct).

Plain talk is also critical for our online writing. Readers have even less tolerance for dense, analytical writing in an online setting. Web pages need strong, well-written sentences that clearly describe our programs and projects.

Clear writing has helped project teams save time with faster reviews by resource agencies and by generating more constructive and concise public comments. It also builds credibility with the public. When the public understands what you are writing, they don't assume you are trying to obscure or hide things. Clear writing enhances transparency.

How we write about what we know is a key communication strategy supporting the agency brand.

Your first job as a writer is to advocate for your reader. Make sure that what you write is clear and understandable from your reader's perspective, not from your own.

"Documents written in plain talk show our respect for people and their time. They are also good customer service. Clearly written documents make it easier for citizens to understand how to access service and the roles of all the parties involved.

Documents written in Plain Talk will include:

- ***Clear language that is commonly used by the intended audience;***
- ***Only the information needed by the recipient, presented in a logical sequence;***
- ***Sentences, written in active voice, that make it clear who is responsible for what;***
- ***Layout and design that help the reader understand the meaning on the first try. This includes adequate white space, bullet lists, helpful headings and other proven techniques."***

Governor's Executive Order 05-03: Plain Talk

Meeting Your Readers' Needs

Your first job as a writer is to advocate for your reader. Make sure that what you write is clear and understandable from your reader's perspective, not from your own.

Many people scan written documents to get answers. They want to know how a plan will affect them, how to assure that their needs are met or what happens if they don't do something. Organize your writing to respond to readers' concerns and create sign-posts to help them navigate through the document.

Stay on message

Powerful documents convey to readers a clear set of messages. These messages must be consistent and credible, resonate with readers and convey the unique characteristics of our agency and the work we do. WSDOT uses consistent strategic messages statewide.

OneDOT

Writers and editors should watch for opportunities to reinforce our agency's OneDOT brand. Unless there is a compelling, reader-driven reason to reference a part of the organization (for example, Olympic Region or Environmental Services) in your document, simply refer to us as WSDOT.

Write short sections and limit paragraphs to one issue

Short sections break the material into easily understood segments. Limiting each paragraph to one issue makes the document easy to read. With only one issue in each paragraph, you can use headings that reflect the entire paragraph.

Use declarative headings

Headings direct readers' attention and help readers find their way through a document. Make sure they are concise and descriptive.

Use short sentences

Express only one idea in each sentence. Long, complicated sentences often suggest the writer is not clear about what to say. Anything over 20 words is usually too long. Vary sentence structure to avoid choppiness, but don't revert to tangled, multi-clause sentences.

Use an appropriate tone

The tone of a letter or e-mail affects how the reader responds to a message. A disconnected tone may appear condescending or cold and may cause the reader to tune out the message. If a letter will disappoint the reader, consider opening the letter with *I'm sorry*.

Use *you* and other pronouns to speak directly to readers. Using *you* pulls readers into your document. Using *we* to refer to your agency makes your sentences shorter and crisper and your document more accessible to readers.

Use the active voice

Write active sentences by using verbs properly. It makes it clear who did what to whom. Not: *It was done*. But: *We did it*.

Avoid words that confuse readers

- Undefined or overused abbreviations and acronyms.
- Different terms used for the same thing (car, vehicle, auto and conveyance—choose one).
- Giving a technical or legal meaning to a word commonly understood to mean something different (defining *car* to include trucks).
- Legal, technical and fashionable jargon.
- Strings of nouns such as, *surface water quality protection procedures* (try *water quality procedures*) or the *10 year regional transit system plan map* (try *10 year transit plan*).
- Pronouns that don't clearly refer to specific nouns.

Use vertical lists

Vertical lists highlight a series of requirements or other information in a visually clear way. Use vertical lists to help readers focus on important material. Vertical lists:

- Highlight levels of importance.
- Help the reader understand the order in which things happen.
- Make it easy for the reader to identify all necessary steps in a process.
- Add blank space for easy reading.

Environmental Documents

Preparing an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement

This section provides guidance to help you incorporate our communications philosophy into your Environmental Assessment (EA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), or other environmental documents that circulate to general public audiences.

Coordinated messages and tools

Our public environmental documents should demonstrate how we propose to meet a transportation need while protecting and enhancing surrounding land, water and communities. We can accomplish this by following the principles of "plain talk" and coordinated messaging.

While WSDOT's communications are decentralized, it's critical that we convey the OneDOT brand by coordinated messaging. This ensures that consistent information is available to our customers regardless of the source they use to find it.

By adhering to the principles of speaking plainly and writing clearly, we avoid the trap of creating oversized and overly complex documents that confuse our readers. When we use clear writing techniques in our project-level environmental reviews, we make the results of technical analyses more accessible to the intended reader.

Key concepts apply to complex environmental documents just as they do for press releases and the Web! The who, what, when, where, why and how of WSDOT's projects, services and programs are key messages that help us tell our story. In our project-level environmental documents, we convey key messages by following four principles:

- ***Tell a story***
- ***Engage the reader***
- ***Make it brief***
- ***Make it visual***

We have many project level examples that demonstrate how these principles are applied. WSDOT has been recognized nationally for our work improving the quality of environmental documents. Our efforts formed the basic recommendations in a national guidance document sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (see online resources at the end of this chapter).

What are the benefits of Plain Talk and clear writing in our environmental review documents?

Clear writing helps our project teams save time with faster reviews by resource agencies. It helps decision makers weigh the pro's and con's. Plain talk in our project documents also generates more constructive and concise public comments, better engaging them into the discussion. When the public and other agencies understand what we are proposing to do, they don't assume we are trying to obscure or hide things from them.

Are there WSDOT format and style requirements?

Yes. We require our project environmental documents to follow the principles set forth in this manual. Contractors and WSDOT Staff should also follow the rules on graphics outlined.

If you want to experiment with graphics to better communicate a complex concept, consult our graphics office. Work as a team with your region or modal communication staff.

Correspondence Checklists

We believe all correspondence should be treated as valued links to our customers. In support of efforts to improve the public's perception and image of WSDOT as an accountable agency, we encourage timely responses that are informative and respectful, while maintaining a human element. Below is a checklist to assist you with correspondence to the public.

- ☐ Was the letter or e-mail originally sent to someone else? If so, explain that and let the recipient know why you are answering.
- ☐ Did you thank the author for taking the time to write? They are doing us a favor by providing us with customer feedback.
- ☐ Did you acknowledge the author's frustration, experience or inconvenience?
- ☐ Did you address all of the author's key issues?
- ☐ If we made a mistake, own up to it, and tell the author how we will prevent a repeat.
- ☐ Is your answer clear and concise? Shorter sentences are easier for most people to read and understand.
- ☐ Did you avoid using acronyms and jargon? Terms may be common to us, but the general public may not understand what they mean.
- ☐ Did you keep your letter short? One page is a good target.
- ☐ If you are drafting a response for Secretary Hammond's signature that requires a long and detailed explanation, create an attachment to accompany a one-page letter.
- ☐ Will your response meet the Department's correspondence turnaround time?
- ☐ If you know that gathering all the information needed for a complete response will take a longer period of time, send the customer an interim response.
- ☐ Did you include a name and phone number or e-mail address of a contact person in case more information is needed?
- ☐ Has a second party reviewed the letter for content, spelling, grammar and tone?
- ☐ Has the letter been signed by an appropriate Department official?

WSDOT Style Guide

The WSDOT Style Guide is periodically updated. For the most up to date style guide go to: www.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/StyleGuide

Questions and suggestions are always welcome. Please contact the Communications office at 360-705-7075.

This style guide is provided to help writers and editors working for the Washington State Department of Transportation provide information in a clear and consistent manner. Generally, WSDOT follows Associated Press style. Listed below you will find clarifications and exceptions.

Useful reference materials include *The Associated Press Stylebook*, *The Chicago Manual of Style* and www.apstylebook.com/ask_editor.php

A

abbreviations and acronyms: In general, avoid the use of abbreviations and acronyms. If you choose to use them, spell out on first reference. When spelling out the first reference, only capitalize proper nouns: HOV (high occupancy vehicle), EIS (environmental impact statement), WSP (Washington State Patrol). Abbreviations and acronyms are acceptable in a headline. See The Associated Press Stylebook for more information. Refer to the Transportation Acronym Guide (www.wsdot.wa.gov/Reference/Acronym.htm) for full names of transportation terms.

absolutes: The occasion is rare when a writer can predict, for instance, that it will absolutely snow at a certain time. Use words such as may to provide flexibility. Similarly, be careful with the use of most and first when describing an event so you don't make an unsubstantiated claim.

accident: WSDOT style is collision or crash, not accident. An accident is defined as anything that happens by chance without an apparent cause, or a mishap, especially one causing injury or death. Highway collisions usually have an underlying cause. As a result, words such as collision and crash are more accurate.

active voice: WSDOT style is to use active voice whenever possible. Active voice demonstrates responsibility and enhances readability.

addresses: Follow Associated Press style with one exception: WSDOT style abbreviates directionals in addresses without a number. Spell out and capitalize First through Ninth when used as street names: NE Fourth Avenue.

affect, effect: Affect, as a verb, means to influence: The project will affect traffic. Avoid using affect as a noun.

Effect, as a verb, means to cause: The director will effect many changes in the organization. Effect, as a noun, means result: The effect was overwhelming.

B

back up, backup: back up (v.) Closing the lane will back up traffic. Back up the car to get out of the driveway.

backup (n. and adj.) Noun: The backup extended for 10 miles. Adjective: We need a backup plan.

brand name: See trademark.

bridge: Only capitalize when part of a formal name. Capitalize Tacoma Narrows Bridge, but lowercase on second reference without full name: the bridge.

bulleted lists: Use bulleted lists to improve a document's readability. Use a colon to introduce lists. Capitalize the first letter of each item in the list and end each section of the list with a period, unless the items are single words. Also, reference lists intended as a menu of options require no punctuation.

Keep all items parallel by using the same language structure throughout the list. For example:

Make sure you bring:

- Boots
- Hats
- Gloves
- Jackets

To prepare for winter travel across mountain passes, consider:

- Checking pass condition reports before you depart.
- Packing a winter emergency kit in your car.
- Telling family or friends about your route and schedule.
- Updating your first aid training.

C

carpool: (n., v.) WSDOT style is one word, following transit industry standard. The AP Stylebook lists it as two words: car pool.

Caterpillar: Capitalize when referring to the trademark name. See trademark.

city: Capitalize city if part of a proper name, an integral part of an official name, or a regularly used nickname. Lowercase elsewhere, including all city of phrases: a Texas city, the city government, the city Board of Education, the city of Seattle.

Capitalize when part of a formal title before a name: City Manager Joe Gavinski. Lowercase when not part of the formal title: city Health Commissioner Frank Smith.

chokepoint (n.): One word.

compose, comprise, constitute: Compose means to create or put together. Comprise means to contain, to include all or to embrace. Constitute, in the sense of form or make up, may be the best word if neither compose nor comprise seems to fit. See the AP Stylebook for more information.

county line: Lowercase, no hyphen. If referring to a specific county, line remains lowercase: The Pierce County line.

D

data: A plural noun, it normally takes plural verbs and pronouns.

dateline: When writing a press release, start the body of the release with the name of the city where the story takes place, not where the person reporting it is sitting, written out in all capital letters followed by a dash: SEATTLE –. If more accurate to describe the dateline as a county, do so: KING COUNTY –. If the location where the story takes place is little known or outside city limits, drop the dateline and describe the location in the lead.

dates: Always follow the format of time, date, place: 2 p.m., Nov. 28, 2007. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate only Jan., Feb., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. Spell out when using alone, or with a year alone.

When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas: November 2004.

When a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas: Please join us Jan. 24, 2007, at our open house.

Avoid using between when listing events of known duration. Instead, use to: The open house will be from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Listing the year generally is unnecessary if an event occurs during the same year as publication. The present year is assumed.

de-icer, de-icing: Hyphenate.

dimension: Use figures and spell out inches, feet, yards, etc., to indicate depth, height, length and width. Hyphenate adjectival forms before nouns. See the AP Stylebook for examples.

distances: Use figures for 10 and above, spell out one through nine: Crews will pave four miles of Interstate 5.

directions: Lowercase when referring to compass direction: east, western, northwest, southbound, etc. Capitalize when referring to a region: The storm hit the Northwest hard.

drawspan: One word.

E

easy to use, easy-to-use: Hyphenate as an adjective phrase preceding a noun: This easy-to-use map will show you the way. Otherwise, do not hyphenate: This map is easy to use.

effect, affect: See affect, effect

e-mail: Always hyphenate.

e-mail updates: Preferred over Listserv to avoid jargon.

ensure, insure: Use ensure to mean guarantee: Steps were taken to ensure accuracy.

Use insure for references to insurance: The policy insures his life

environmental justice communities: WSDOT style is minority or low-income populations.

F

feedback: While it is accurate to use this word to mean comments in the form of opinions about and reactions to something, consider avoiding this word because another common definition, feedback in a loudspeaker, evokes a strong negative response. Consider alternates such as comments and questions.

flier, flyer: Flier refers to a circular. Flyer is the proper name of some trains and buses: The Western Flyer.

front-end loader, back-end loader (n.)

fundraising, fundraiser: One word in all cases.

G

gas tax: Lowercase when referring to the 2005 gas tax or the gas tax. Capitalize the formal names 2005 Transportation Tax Package or 2003 Nickel Funding Package.

H

headlines: Use sentence case. Capitalize only the first word and proper nouns. Headlines must include a place name (Seattle, Bellingham, north of Arlington) and, if appropriate, a highway name. Always include an active verb in headlines. Use numerals for all figures and single quotes for quotation marks.

headings: Use headings and subheadings frequently to help enhance readability and make your documents easier to scan. Avoid generic headings (introduction, background, findings, conclusion, etc.). Instead, use headings that more meaningfully indicate the content contained in the section below. Readers should be able to scan the headings and obtain the main information the writer intends to convey in the document.

Do not break a heading across pages, and publish at least one paragraph of text with each heading before breaking to another page. You may need to leave extra space at the bottom of a page to keep a heading with some of the text that follows. See the orphans and widows entries.

highway names: State Route 1, US Route 1 or Interstate 1 is preferred when referring to highways. Don't capitalize state route or interstate on second reference without a specified highway number: the interstate remains open. Don't capitalize route on second reference to a US route without specified highway number.

Write out highway names on first reference, then use abbreviations. Use a space when writing SR 1 and US 1. Use a hyphen when writing I-5. Abbreviations are okay in a headline.

HOV, high occupancy vehicle: Do not capitalize high occupancy vehicle unless it is used as a proper noun: I-5 – Everett, State Route 526 to US 2 High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes Project or High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes Compliance Rate Report. Consider using phrases that more clearly evoke high occupancy travel: buses, trains, carpools and vanpools.

host: Use only as a noun. In this headline example, instead of "WSDOT will host open house" try "Possible solutions displayed at open house" or "WSDOT invites you to an open house."

HOT, high occupancy toll: Do not capitalize high occupancy toll unless it is used as a proper noun: SR 167 High Occupancy Toll Lanes Project or High Occupancy Toll Lanes Environmental Impact Statement.

hot line: Two words. Also: tip line.

I

impact: This is a strong word defined as striking of one body against another, a forceful consequence, a strong effect, and the violent interaction of individuals or groups entering into combat. This word should only be used in cases when this strong definition is intended. Otherwise, use affect or effect.

insure: See the ensure, insure entry.

Internet: Capitalize.

intranet

J

job descriptions: Always lowercase. See titles.

K

kickoff (n.), kick off (v.)

L

Legislature: Capitalize in all references to both houses of Washington state government, even when the state name is dropped: Washington Legislature. Both houses of the Legislature adjourned today. Also capitalize in such constructions as: the 100th Legislature, the state Legislature. Lowercase legislature when used generically: No legislature has approved the amendment. Use legislature in lowercase for all plural references: The Arkansas and Colorado legislatures are considering the amendment. See AP for more details.

login (n.), log in (v.)

M

Mother Nature: Avoid use of this term. It suggests belief in a pagan spirit as the cause for weather. Consider that WSDOT would not attribute a storm to God either. References to weather are often clearer and more descriptive without its use. For example, rather than saying, "WSDOT is preparing for a winter blast from Mother Nature," consider saying, "WSDOT plow drivers are ready to clear two feet of predicted snowfall."

Mount: Spell out in the names of communities and mountains: Mount Vernon, Mount Rainier, except Mt. Baker Ski Area.

N

newspaper names: Capitalize articles if they are part of the publication's name. Insert a city name in parentheses for Washington newspapers if the originating city is not apparent, or if there are several newspapers by the same name. If you are writing about national publications, or you want to identify where the paper is based, include city and state in parentheses after the newspaper's name: The News Tribune (Tacoma, Wash.). Check newspaper mastheads and websites for clarification. Web addresses are not always an indication.

Examples:

The Seattle Times

The (Everett) Herald

The Bellingham Herald

Skagit Valley Herald

The Columbian

The News Tribune

Seattle Weekly

USA Today ("Today" is not all capitalized, according to AP style.)

nonprofit (n., adj.)

numbers: Spell out numbers under 10. Use figures when referring to a person's age or dimensions. See distances. Spell out a numeral at the start of a sentence, except for years, or rephrase the sentence. Shorten long figures by using million or billion: $5 million, $5 billion. Use decimals when appropriate and round up: $5.4 million. Numbers less than one million should be written out numerically: $530,000, $4,000, $200. For internal WSDOT phone numbers posted to the intranet, write out the entire number and bold the extension, which is the last four digits: 360-705-7817.

O

off-ramp, on-ramp: WSDOT style is always to hyphenate.

over: Use more than to denote quantity or amount: More than $5 million was raised. Only use over to describe a spatial relationship.

orphans: Orphans are acceptable, although widows should be avoided. These guidelines are primarily for people concerned with page layout. Orphan lines are single lines that appear at the bottom of a page, and orphan words are single words that are on a line by themselves at the end of a paragraph. They are called orphans because they have a future but no past. See also widows.

P

park and ride: Lowercase unless part of a formal name: North Seattle Park and Ride. Do not use the ampersand in place of and.

partnering: Avoid use of this term. Use of “partner” as a noun is preferred. Also, partnering as a verb implies equality where often the contributions or responsibilities aren’t equal. Suggested substitute: working with.

percent: Spell out the word percent and always use figures: 1 percent, 2.5 percent (use decimals, not fractions). For amounts less than 1 percent, precede the decimal with a zero: The rate of accidents increased 0.8 percent. Repeat percent with every figure: WSDOT expects traffic in the area to increase 20 percent to 50 percent in the next 10 years.

phone numbers: No parentheses around area codes, hyphenate. WSDOT style is to always use area codes: 206-440-4704. The format for toll-free numbers: 800-111-1000. If extension numbers are needed, use a comma to separate the main number from the extension: 212-621-1500, ext. 2.

plain talk: Use language that is clear, simple and concise. Follow the rules set forth by the “Plain Talk” executive order. Also known as reader-friendly and plain language. For WSDOT employees, more information is available on the WSDOT intranet at wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Library/PlainTalk.htm.

project: Only capitalize when part of a formal name. Capitalize I-405 Totem Lake Freeway Station Project, but lowercase on second reference without full name: the project. Take care when claiming that a project is going to do something. A project can’t close lanes of a highway during construction, but crews or engineers can. A project can, however, enhance safety or alleviate congestion.

pronouns: Maintain subject-pronoun agreement. Avoid referring to an inanimate subject as they. Incorrect: Microsoft unveils their new product this week. Correct: Microsoft unveils its new product this week. Another option is to insert a responsible human “doer”: Microsoft executives unveil their new product this week.

Problems maintaining gender neutrality with pronouns usually can be resolved by rewriting the sentence. Do not resort to nontraditional gimmicks such as s/he or he/she, or the use of they as a singular pronoun. Proposed alternatives, such as s/he, interrupt the flow of the sentence and appear to make a political point in the middle of whatever else the writer is trying to say. One method of writing around the problem is to rewrite the sentence in a plural form. Instead of: A staff member can access the data by logging in to his or her account, rewrite as plural: Staff members can access the data by logging in to their accounts.

R

rainstorm, rainwater: Both are one word.

rear-end: Always hyphenate. Two words refers to buttocks.

right of way, rights of way

S

seasons: Lowercase spring, summer, fall, winter and derivatives such as springtime unless part of a formal name.

semitruck: One word, no hyphen.

sideswipe: One word.

significant: Use sparingly. Consider using a more descriptive term. Try perceivable or noticeable. If the significance is something you can describe, try the description instead. Rather than saying there is a significant dip in the highway, consider saying cars disappear from view as they travel through a dip in the highway. Without explanation, significant gives the unsubstantiated opinion of the writer.

snowplow (n.)

snowcat (n.): If referring to a machine specifically manufactured by Tucker, use trademark name Sno-Cat.

snowblower (n.)

snow event: Avoid using this term. Use snow or snowstorm.

state: Do not capitalize unless part of a formal name: the Washington State Department of Transportation. Do not capitalize state in Washington state. Do not capitalize state when used simply as an adjective to specify a level of jurisdiction: state Rep. William Smith, the state Transportation Department, state funds.

stormwater (n.)

storms: Snowstorm, rainstorm, windstorm are all one word. Never a "snow event."

T

that vs. which: Use that and which to refer to inanimate objects and to animals without a name. Use that for essential clauses, important to the meaning of a sentence, and without commas: I remember the day that we met. Use which for nonessential clauses, where the pronoun is less necessary, and use commas: The team, which finished last a year ago, is in first place. (Tip: If you can drop the clause and not lose the meaning of the sentence, use which; otherwise, use that. A which clause is surrounded by commas; no commas are used with that clauses.)

thing: Avoid referring to any item as a thing. There's always a better description.

time: Use figures except for noon and midnight. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes: 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m. Avoid redundancies such as 10 a.m. this morning, instead: 10 a.m. today.

timeline: One word.

time span: Two words.

titles: Job titles are capitalized if they are formal, rather than occupational, and immediately precede the name: President Barack H. Obama. The following are occupational: engineer, attorney, farmer, spokesman. If there's any doubt, flip the sentence around so the name comes first and the title is offset by commas: Katie Skipper, a WSDOT spokeswoman, offered tips for traveling on icy roads.

trademark: In general, use a generic equivalent unless the trademark name is an essential part of the story. When a trademark is used, capitalize it.

type style: WSDOT preference is to use two typefaces at the most. WSDOT uses Helvetica and Times New Roman in print, Verdana on the Web and Arial in e-mail. Arial is an acceptable substitute for Helvetica in print. Choose a scale of font sizes and leading that work together. Leading is the space between lines. Good combinations are: font size 6, leading 8; font 10, leading 12; font 20, leading 24; font 48, leading 54.

U

under way: Two words in virtually all uses.

V

vanpool (n., v.): WSDOT style is one word, following transit industry standard.

W

Washington state: Always lowercase state unless it's an official title or department name: Washington State Department of Transportation, but state Department of Transportation and citizens of Washington state.

Web (n.)

website: One word. It is not capitalized. When writing a Web address, omit http://, but do use www: www.wsdot.wa.gov. Do not include a period unless listed at the end of a sentence. When directing online readers to a website, link directly to the correct page. If writing for print, ensure the Web address is clear by writing all letters as lowercase: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/i5. In the case of a very long Web address, first direct the reader to a home page or portal page and provide directions to links that lead to the desired page.

which: See that.

who or that: If referring to an action by a person, use who. If referring to a thing, use that: Children responded to clowns who wore bright colors.

who, whom: Refer to AP Stylebook. Whom receives an action. Tip: If you can change the sentence so there is an action to her, him or them, you usually will use whom. "She gave the ticket to the man with whom she was riding" could be changed to "She gave the ticket to him." But "The woman who was speeding got a ticket" would be changed to "She got a ticket."

widows: Widows should be avoided, although orphans are acceptable. These guidelines are primarily for people concerned with page layout. Widow lines are single lines that appear at the top of a page. They are called widows because they have a past but no future. You may need to insert a line break or edit or add text to prevent a widow line. See also orphans.

windstorm

work: Refer to AP Stylebook or Webster's, but we will give you a few examples here. One word: workbench, workout, workplace, workstation, workweek. Two words: work zone, work sheet, work force. Hyphenated: work-release, work-study, work-up.

WSDOT: Spell out on first reference. See abbreviations and acronyms.

On the Web, our style assumes that readers visiting our site know they are on the WSDOT site, so spelling out WSDOT is unnecessary.

Resources

Books

Hackos, Joann. *Managing Your Documentation Project*. John Wiley and Sons, 1994.

Tufte, Edward. *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press, 1983. This book describes how to depict data and enforce statistical honesty. A timeless classic, this is the Strunk and White of visual design.

Associated Press*. The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law,* 2004.

The University of Chicago Press. *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers (15th Edition*). Chicago, 2003. This is the definitive reference work for formal and technical writing.

Online resources

Writing User-Friendly Documents, from the National Partnership for Reinventing Government.

www.governor.wa.gov/priorities/plaintalk/ptguidelines/Plain%20Talk%20Guidelines.pdf

The Governor's site on Plain Talk:

www.governor.wa.gov/priorities/plaintalk/ptguidelines/default.asp

WSDOT has developed a Style Guide to help to writers and editors. See the Communications Manual appendix page A9 or reference online:

www.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/StyleGuide

FHWA's guidance document:

www.environment.transportation.org/pdf/nepa_process/QUALITY_NEPA_DOCS.pdf

Chapter 4

Media Relations

Media Relations at WSDOT

Everyone at WSDOT is a communicator. We talk about our work with colleagues, family, friends, community groups, commuters, people who work for other government agencies and more. When it comes to talking to the media, different people throughout the agency have different roles and responsibilities.

In some cases, news reporters approach us with questions. In others, we pitch ourselves and the work we do to news reporters in hopes they'll cover WSDOT.

What is news?

Regardless of the type of story, a reporter must judge whether the potential story is newsworthy. News is something that is new or not normal. For example, "dog bites man" is boring and not news. Dogs bite people all the time. However, "man bites dog" is unusual and it could probably play across the top of most major newspapers. Therefore, when talking to reporters remember they are looking for the unique story.

The media will judge the value of potential news items by the following criteria:

- Timeliness – Material must be recent, current or near-term.
- Proximity – Local people, events, governments and a local slant on a national story are good local news.
- Impact – When a subject affects people more profoundly it's more newsworthy.
- Magnitude – If a subject affects more people it is more newsworthy.
- Conflict – Differences between citizens or government agencies are often news.
- Prominence – This could also be called the celebrity factor (e.g., Elvis was seen at the multi-modal center).
- Oddity – Not to be confused with prominence, this is the "man bites dog" type of story.
- Human interest – For example, children and animals make any subject more newsworthy.

Most of our news releases are sent to the media in one area. Therefore, proximity is inherent. If we plan ahead, our news should be timely and

Everyone at WSDOT is a communicator. We talk about our work with colleagues, family, friends, community groups, commuters, people who work for other government agencies and more.

News is something that is new or not normal.

make an impact. Stories about conflict and oddity seem to have their own way of getting into the media whether we like it or not. Don't overestimate the magnitude of your project, but don't sell it short, either.

Who should talk to a reporter?

WSDOT's spokesperson for each media interview varies depending upon the situation and who has the needed expertise and abilities. Professional communicators are not the only media spokespersons nor should they be. In general, it's more interesting and effective for reporters to talk to the WSDOT staff person who is an expert on the topic they're interested in. It's much more convincing to hear about our agency and the work we do from the people who do the work.

To determine who should appropriately respond to a media question or pitch a story to the media, we consider who has the following:

- The expertise required to respond to reporters questions knowledgeably and credibly.
- The ability to use appropriate strategic messages and provide clear, concise information.
- The confidence and poise necessary to speak with the media.
- The time and is in the right location to take advantage of media opportunities.

The appropriate spokesperson varies from situation to situation.

What do I do if a reporter contacts me?

If a reporter contacts you and you're not sure if you're the correct person to respond, please immediately contact a communications staff member. Sometimes when we're addressing a highly controversial or sensitive issue, WSDOT managers announce that only a specific person or people are authorized to speak to an issue. When this occurs, please refer all calls to the designated spokesperson.

What should I do if I have information that should be shared with news reporters?

Contact a communications staff member who is assigned to help you. Staff will work with you to develop an appropriate media release strategy and pitch the story to news reporters.

Can consultants or contractors speak to reporters about WSDOT projects?

WSDOT leads media relations for our projects and programs. Consultants and contractors should carefully coordinate with appropriate staff anytime they speak with the media about WSDOT projects. Circumstances and media relations strategy dictate whether or not it's helpful for consultants and contractors to speak with the media about WSDOT projects. Consultants and contractors must not release information about WSDOT projects and programs without WSDOT's consent. Contact WSDOT communications staff for help if you're working with a consultant or contractor who feels it's important that they speak with the media about our project or program.

Anytime a consultant or contractor speaks with the media, they must take care to clearly and repeatedly identify that they are speaking on behalf of their contractor or consulting firm, not WSDOT. Like WSDOT staff, consultants must submit a media contact report after they complete interviews with reporters about WSDOT projects.

Where do I get help?

Everyone at WSDOT has access to professional communications support and advice when they need it. One of the most important roles WSDOT communications professionals play is to provide strategic advice and coaching to staff members who speak to reporters.

Communications staff members are located around the state and cover a variety of topics and issues. Contact the WSDOT Communications Office at 360-705-7075 to find out who is assigned to help you.

WSDOT leads media relations for our projects and programs. Consultants and contractors should carefully coordinate with appropriate staff anytime they speak with the media about WSDOT projects.

Media contact reports

Whenever a reporter contacts you for an interview, provide a summary of the interview for inclusion in the daily report sent to WSDOT management and communications staff. E-mail the summary to mediacontacts@wsdot.wa.gov.

Your report should include:

- The name of the reporter and the organization they represent.
- The subject of the interview and the angle the reporter was working on. Try to get a sense of whether this is a positive or negative report.

Press Releases

A press release communicates newsworthy information in a narrative format. Each WSDOT region, department and office is encouraged to identify newsworthy projects and draft press releases, also known as news releases. Office and field employees see WSDOT's work – if something is newsworthy, write about it or contact the communications staff.

Writing a Press Release

Press releases are generally a single page. If additional information is required to tell a complicated story, develop fact sheets (either printed or online) and make sure staff will be available to answer follow-up questions.

All press releases need approval from the HQ Communications Director. Please plan ahead and provide:

- At least 24 hour notice for review.
- Follow up with a phone call on emergent issues.

Media Advisory

A media advisory briefly announces a specific event or activity. When writing a media release, use the five *Ws*: who, what, where, when and why.

Make sure you get the appropriate approvals from your program director for the content of the release. Once drafted or when you know what your message is, forward the press release to your WSDOT communicator. They'll help you edit, format and distribute it to the news media.

Fact Sheets

Fact sheets can help explain complex subjects to reporters and the general public.

Gather content

Collect as much information as you can on the project. Consider the history, budget, location, affected citizens, materials used, etc. Talk to the engineers or the employees performing the work. Anticipate the questions a reporter might ask and look for surprising, interesting or unusual details a reporter might not expect. Formulate questions, which can be used later for a Frequently Asked Questions list. For example:

- Who will do the work?
- How will this affect the driving public?
- When will it take place?
- Where will the project occur?
- What is the project office's role?
- What is the project cost?
- What is the environmental impact?
- How will mitigation plans work?

Organize and outline

Sort the information by subject. For example, a project office is going to reconfigure an intersection and create a roundabout. The information you could collect includes the contract award, the cost of the project, intersection closure dates, detour routes, advantages to the reconfiguration, and average daily traffic counts for the intersection.

Take each piece of information and group it with related information. Assign each group of information a name such as ***Contractor, Project Costs, Public Impact,*** etc.

List the names of each group. You now have an outline for the fact sheet. Rearrange the information until the outline makes sense.

Trim, combine and simplify

In as few pages as possible, produce a fact sheet that highlights topics that would interest a newspaper or the targeted audience. The fact sheet will ideally contain at least five groups from the outline, but no more than 10.

Simplify complex ideas. Use comparisons and analogies to describe complicated issues or practices. Turn jargon into plain language. Focus on the benefits of the project.

Keep trimming. If the project or subject is too complex to reduce to one page, consider developing additional fact sheets, making sure each one focuses on an aspect of the entire project.

Format and produce

Designs of fact sheets vary but consistency is important. No matter which style is used, the WSDOT logo should be integrated into the document. Try to keep the fact sheet to one page, or no more than three.

The title of the page should read ***Fact Sheet*** with a headline that explains the subject of the page. Using the outline format, use a small header for each group. Bullets are a good way to open each paragraph.

Include the most vital and relevant information. We want to keep it simple and easy to read.

Media Kits

Media kits, or press kits, are collections of company information. They are compiled to encourage interest from the media, stakeholders and the public. Media kits act as a resume for the agency and aim to get someone's attention, create an impression and whet their appetite for more information.

Traditionally, media kits are collections of articles and information sent via snail mail in presentation folders. Technology now allows companies to post media kits online, providing audio and video clips. Another option is to create a digital media kit, and mail it out on disk.

Basic media kit

- Pitch letter – This is the first thing the reader sees.
- Two business cards – One for the reader and one to pass on.
- Fact sheet – A quick one to two page reference sheet of useful information.
- Frequently asked questions – A compilation of common questions.
- Recent articles – What is the press publishing about the topic?
- Press releases – Be sure they are recent and relevant.
- Samples/giveaways – Highway maps and litterbags are usually available.

Be selective when including material in the media kit. Too much information will overwhelm the reader. News editors typically work under deadlines and don't have time to read lengthy media kits.

Develop alluring packaging for the media kit. Package the kit neatly and in a way that gets noticed. Bright envelopes or folders catch the eye and are more likely to be read.

After sending a media kit make a point to call the editor or news director and see if there are questions to be answered or if an interview can be scheduled. A thank you note for coverage is a nice final touch.

A media advisory briefly announces a specific event or activity. When writing a media release, use the five* Ws*: who, what, where, when and why.

Understanding the Media

The role of the reporter

To effectively deal with the media, it is best to understand the role of the reporter and requirements of their job. The average news reporter develops stories on a regular basis. Some are ***hard*** news stories, some are ***softer*** features and some are personal points of view columns.

Regardless of the type of story, inevitably the reporter must find the news in it. Keep in mind the following basics to develop relationships with reporters:

- Reporters are professionals. Reporters get paid to do a good job. Their professional credo is to represent a story fairly and not necessarily from the agency's angle.
- Reporters work within a highly competitive environment. Competition among media outlets to cover a story first is very strong. Reporters can be cost-effective marketers. Generally there is no huge budget for public outreach campaigns – reporters are great resources for informing and involving the public.
- Reporters have limited time and staff resources. Deadlines drive reporters' quest for information. Often the information is needed immediately and they have limited time to do the research necessary to adequately understand the issue. Reporters are not always advocates. Remember the reporter will think primarily in terms of column inches and airtime – whether the person being interviewed has won them over or not.
- Reporters are not your enemy. It is quite possible to educate reporters on issues and positions that can potentially produce favorable coverage.
- Additionally, the following tips can help make experiences with the media positive ones:
- Work within reporters' timeframes. When a reporter requests information, always ask for their deadline – is it in a week or one hour?
- Be considerate of the deadlines. If calling reporters just before their deadline, acknowledge it is bad timing and explain the urgency of the call. Don't neglect or overwhelm reporters. The media have a variety of stories to cover, all with deadlines. It is important to return their calls, but try not to inundate them with calls and information.
- Never be combative. Refrain from engaging in arguments with reporters even if he or she wrote something unfair or untrue. State the agency's case calmly and look for other ways to affect the reporter's views.
- Act as a year-round resource. Be a resource to reports on a regular basis as opposed to during the initial construction of a project. Provide key pieces of information and fact sheets on projects, and send descriptions and events related to the project. Capitalize on every opportunity. When a reporter calls, regardless of the premise, seize the opportunity to speak through the reporter to the general public.

After the interview

Provide the region or headquarters' communication office a written recap of the interview detailing who the reporter was, with what company, the gist of the interview and when the story will run.

The results

Thank the reporter for the story – Whenever a story is written accurately and fairly, a thank-you note or phone call is appropriate.

Respond to inaccurate information – If there is incorrect information in the story, stay calm. Call the reporter as soon as possible to alert them of the mistake. If presented in a friendly manner, the reporter will usually be thankful for the feedback and provide a retraction if necessary.

Print

Print news sources include daily newspapers, weekly or community newspapers, magazines, and online written news sources, like KIROTV.com, Slate.com, or KOMOAM1000.com. Print stories are generally more comprehensive than television or radio stories. Print reporters, photographers and editors have more time to prepare stories and typically cover fewer stories each day than TV and radio reporters.

How does newspaper news reporting work?

Reporter

A newspaper reporter working for a daily city paper typically covers a specific beat, like Eastside transportation, business, South County, etc. Reporters are usually all-purpose at smaller daily and weekly newspapers.

Reporters cover the timely news of the day. They often try to tie a more immediate story to a larger trend or long-term concern. They need a news hook, like new information or controversy, to get published. They are often on the lookout for opportunities to obtain photos, charts or graphs to accompany their story. While some reporters have free reign to find and write stories, most receive story assignments from their editors.

Editor

Editors assign stories to reporters, edit reporters' stories, determine whether stories appear in the newspaper, and decide where stories appear in the newspaper. They can significantly change a story by editing text, influencing headlines, and shaping photo and graphic selection and use.

Photos and headlines

At-large newspapers photographers, photo editors and headline writers work with, but not for, reporters and their news editors. These sometimes independent-minded journalists can significantly influence how a story is presented, sometimes to the dismay of news editors and reporters.

Deadlines

Deadlines vary from newspaper to newspaper. Stories for daily newspapers published in the morning are typically due the evening before. Stories must be completed farther in advance for weekly newspapers or sections of daily newspapers that are printed in advance (like the travel section, opinion sections or magazine section).

What is a wire service?

A wire service is a company that gathers news reports and photos and sells them to newspapers, radio, television and other news reporting outlets. Wire services can develop stories using their own reporters and photographers or can purchase stories from their members. Examples of wire services include the Associated Press and Reuters.

Chains of newspapers owned by the same company also share stories or sell stories to other newspapers, radio or television. Examples of newspaper chains that share or sell news stories include Knight Ridder, Gannett, Hearst, Washington Post and New York Times. Locally, both the Olympian and the Bellingham Herald are owned by Gannett. As a result, you'll often see the same regional story in these two newspapers.

Why would we want to work with a newspaper reporter?

- To urge them to cover an issue that's important to us. Local newspapers often cover stories that television or radio don't cover.
- News stories are generally considered unbiased, independent and credible.
- Newspaper stories are typically longer and more in-depth than television or radio stories.
- Television and radio reporters use newspapers to get story ideas.
- Newspaper stories are part of the historic record. People will find a newspaper story online for years.

How do you work effectively with a newspaper reporter?

- Don't forget the four steps to a stronger interview:
  - Develop and use your key message
  - Make your information relevant to real people
  - Use clear, concise language
  - Practice the interview in advance
- Become a useful, reliable, credible source. Build a relationship with reporters who cover your project or work. Contact them when you have real news or a strong news hook.
- Always provide accurate, understandable information. When you don't have the information they need, provide useful contacts.
- Provide news in the way each reporter prefers; e-mail, fax or phone.
- Always return calls promptly. You want to be their favorite source.
- Anticipate their needs and gather information they'll need in advance.
- Be straightforward. Don't hide bad news or bury the most interesting and relevant information. Consider bad news an opportunity to build your credibility and focus media attention on what we're doing to fix the problem.

How do you prepare to work with newspaper reporters?

- When you have real news, release it promptly.
- Tie the news to your key messages.
- Be on the lookout for story possibilities.
- Prepare facts, figures and background information in easy to use formats. Anticipate the information they'll need and provide it quickly.
- Conduct a practice question and answer session.
- If you refer a reporter to other team members, alert them. Let them know your key message and share with them any facts and figures you released. This will help us maintain consistency and credibility.

What other types of newspaper coverage can we pursue?

Guest editorials

A guest editorial is an opinion column that appears on the editorial pages of a newspaper. News radio and television programs rarely allow guest editorials. The guest editorial is a one-time presentation of the author's views accompanied by a brief biography. The author or authors are usually experts or people who have political influence. The editorial page editor, not the news editor, usually decides which guest editorials appear and when they will appear. They typically address a controversial, timely topic. They are often written and submitted well in advance. They must be concise and often need a news hook.

Guest editorials can bring attention to an issue and generate discussion. They offer you more control than an editorial board, though the newspaper still edits guest editorials and decides whether to run the column.

When pursuing guest editorials, recruit a compelling author or authors and include a unique or compelling appeal. Include a call to action; what do you want readers to do with the information you provide?

Editorial board

A newspaper editorial board typically includes editorial staff and newspaper publishers or their designees. The editorial staff of a newspaper differs from news reporters. The editorial staff members write and publish editorial opinions of the newspaper and decide which opinion columns appear in the newspaper. The editorial board typically meets to determine the newspaper's editorial agenda and explore the issues of the day, often working with guests who provide insight and expertise. Meeting with an editorial board more closely resembles an intelligent discussion rather than a formal presentation.

Request a meeting with an editorial board when you want to provide timely information about an issue and urge the board to feature the topic on the editorial pages. Editorial board meetings can be difficult to obtain, particularly during election season. Have a strong pitch ready before you call.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor typically appear on editorial or opinion pages. The information in these letters isn't held to the same standards for accuracy and journalistic integrity as news stories or editorial columns found in the newspaper. Editors often edit letters to make them clearer and more concise. Most newspapers strictly limit the number of words in each letter they'll publish.

While it may seem like a good idea to respond to news stories, columns or letters to the editor, it's not always smart. You're bringing up a sensitive subject again and you never know what topics or opinions you'll be paired on the page with. As representatives of a state agency writing in an official capacity, we also don't have the freedom to be as freewheeling with our opinions as members of the public who send letters to the editor.

When a newspaper publishes information that's factually incorrect, requesting a retraction or correction on the news pages is often the smartest approach. When a letter to the editor includes these types of errors, sometimes your only recourse is to reply via a letter to the editor.

Work with communications staff whenever you wish to develop a letter to the editor in your official capacity as a representative of WSDOT.

Case Study - Tacoma Narrows Bridge

In October 2002, WSDOT broke ground on an historic project to construct a new suspension bridge across the Tacoma Narrows, next to the existing Tacoma Narrows Bridge. The project began construction after years of a contentious environmental impact statement process that included significant debate over the Gig Harbor community's opposition to the project's financing plan – the issuing of bonds repaid with tolls.

After three years, the project was moving steadily forward. Construction proved technically challenging but until November 2005 the contractor had not faced any significant schedule challenges.

But that changed when significant corrosion was found on cable wire for the bridge. The source and extent of the corrosion affecting the rolls of highly specialized pencil-width wire put the project's schedule at risk. In addition, WSDOT and the contractor also faced questions related to the overall quality of the bridge's construction.

WSDOT worked closely with its contractor to investigate the source of the corrosion and to strategize how to explain the situation to the public. WSDOT clearly focused on accountability and project delivery in developing key messages about the situation – how the wire problem would affect the project and what steps were being taken to ensure quality on materials being used to build the bridge. WSDOT would use the media to update the public about potential delays or cost increases and address any concerns about the project's quality.

- WSDOT designated a spokesperson.
- WSDOT stressed its role was to ensure quality on all materials used in the bridge construction. Project spokespersons explained the different roles played by WSDOT and the contractor and the fact that any added costs due to this problem would be borne by the contractor.
- WSDOT arranged a media conference at the bridge site.
- WSDOT provided follow-up information in subsequent interviews.

The media conference led to a flurry of coverage on all Seattle-based TV stations as well as in local newspapers. Continuing coverage about the corroded wire was light and it was reported in the context of overall progress rather than just the wire corrosion.

While initial public reaction was one of surprise – mostly due to the apparent ease with which the contractor was meeting project schedule milestones – the general public response was one of confidence. WSDOT clearly communicated how it and its contractor were facing a challenge. That willingness to break our own bad news has since set the stage for later news that the project would not make its April 2007 delivery deadline.

The above crisis communications' case study highlights some classic WSDOT media relations objectives:

- Clearly establish and manage public expectations.
- Be willing to share bad news along with the good news.
- Provide accessibility to the media and others. Don't just talk about the problem, show it.
- Explain options for solving the problem and the most likely course of action.
- Don't make it look too easy – unless it is. Otherwise, identify possible problems and pitfalls that still exist.

The ultimate goal of any media relations effort – whether it is a crisis situation or otherwise – is to maintain the agency's credibility with the public and the media.

Talk radio thrives on interaction among the host, guests and listeners/callers. Talk radio programs typically like to present two sides of an issue and pit guests against each other.

Corrections

It's difficult and typically ineffective to ask for corrections when a newspaper publishes an unflattering photo, negative headline, out-of-context quote or biased story. In these instances, talk to communications staff about whether a response is wise and what response might be most appropriate.

Radio

Advertising research shows that people frequently believe information came from a friend or family member, when actually the information came from radio. This is a testament to the power of radio and the ever-present role it plays in our lives. It's a rare radio listener who focuses their attention on what they're hearing. Ninety percent of radio listeners are driving or riding in their car. The others are generally working, doing chores, reading or otherwise occupied while listening to the radio.

Radio's fundamental weakness? The only way a radio station can grab your attention is through your ears. As a result, radio moves fast to engage listeners. Programmers eliminate anything that requires a long-attention span or doesn't grab attention and hold on to it. Radio coverage provides quick bites of information rather than in-depth discussion. Even talk radio and news radio that claim in-depth coverage rely upon quick hits of information and back-and-forth banter to keep distracted listeners engaged.

Narrow appeal; targeted audience

Radio programming is designed to appeal to a narrow audience. This allows stations to offer advertisers an affordable way to reach the people they think are most likely to purchase their product or service.

Everything you hear on a radio station is tailored to appeal to the interests of their specific audience. Playlists are the most obvious example of this tailoring. A station that wants to reach a young, urban audience might play rap music while a station that wants to reach an older audience might choose a news/talk format. Tailoring to appeal to a specific audience influences everything a station airs, including:

- Disc jockey and reporter selection.
- Promotions and contests.
- Advertisers and the type of advertising.
- Traffic coverage.
- How much (if any) news coverage.
- What type of news they cover.
- How they cover news stories.

For example, a station designed to appeal to suburban women, 25-54 years old would tend to cover health, education and public safety. Any traffic and transportation coverage they offer would focus on issues that interest these listeners. News/talk radio's largest audience is middle-aged males. As a result, these stations boost their sports coverage and crime news. While nearly every station provides workday traffic updates, radio coverage of transportation news is otherwise limited to the most controversial issues or emergencies and upcoming high-impact closures.

How does radio news reporting work?

Disc jockey/radio host

Disc jockeys and radio show hosts are typically the highest paid and certainly the best known radio staff members. While they're not often journalists, they have great influence and often discuss the news of the day on-air. Their style sets the tone for the radio program and tells you a lot about the kinds of listeners a station attracts.

News reporter

Radio news reporters on music-oriented stations are vanishing. These stations instead purchase news reports from a national radio news network, like CBS radio news, ABC radio news or Associated Press radio network news, or share a news reporter with other stations owned by the same media conglomerate, like Clear Channel or Entercom. For example, nearly all news on Entercom-owned stations in Seattle (KMTT, The Mountain; KNND, The End; KQBZ) is provided by their sister station, KIRO radio.

Radio news reporters on news/talk stations cover the timely news of the day. Stories are usually 40 seconds or less, except public radio which airs slightly longer stories. One of radio's advantages over television and newspaper is that it reports frequently throughout the day. As a result, radio stories convey immediacy. They are about what's happening right now. They also tell how the news will impact listeners, particularly listeners driving in their cars.

Traffic reporter

Traffic reports are nearly always provided by traffic reporting specialty companies. One traffic reporter from these companies serves as traffic reporter for multiple stations in a media market, often under multiple pseudonyms. For example, nearly all of the traffic reports heard in Seattle are provided by Metro Traffic. Even the few news stations that have traffic reporters on staff rely upon traffic reporting companies for weekend and nighttime coverage.

Radio stations air traffic reports because they boost rush-hour ratings and listeners demand the information. However, money for ads and sponsorships during these reports goes to the traffic reporting service, not the radio station. As a result, radio stations try to minimize the length of traffic reports to allow more airtime for advertisements that generate money for the station.

Deadlines

Radio deadlines are often immediate. Radio stations try to get news on the air before television or newspapers. Listeners tune into radio in large numbers when a crisis begins. As a result, radio stations are under even greater pressure to deliver the latest information quickly and continuously.

Why would we want to work with a radio reporter?

While radio stations tend to have specific styles and biases, listeners choose the stations they listen to because they find them credible. Radio conveys immediacy and can often be the quickest way to get information out to a broad audience. Radio reaches people while they're in their cars, which makes transportation news particularly relevant.

How do you work effectively with a radio news reporter?

- Don't forget the four steps to a stronger interview:
  - Develop and use your key message.
  - Make your information relevant to real people.
  - Use clear, concise language.
  - Practice the interview in advance.

Radio news reporters need:

- Short sound bites that get right to the point.
- The basics without lots of detail.
- Information about how the story affects the listener; particularly a listener driving in a car.
- What's happening now (no history or background).
- Clear sound with little static. Avoid talking to radio reporters on your cellular phone or speaker phone. Instead, use a land line and a handset or microphone.
- Natural sound that adds interest to the story.

To become a preferred source for radio reporters:

- Anticipate their needs. Be ready with your key message and key information. Have facts on hand. They often want to put you live on the air immediately.
- Provide accurate, understandable information. Be ready to describe what you see, smell and feel right now. Don't bother with history or technical background information.
- Call them when you have news their listeners need to know. Don't wait for them to call you.
- Return calls promptly. Don't be surprised if they call you throughout the day to get frequent updates.
- Use plain language. Be yourself. Tailor the information you provide to people driving in their cars.
- Remember that the only thing you can use to convey your message is your voice. Be animated.

Other tips for radio success:

- Allow pauses between sentences and thoughts to allow clean edits.
- End sentences by lowering your tone of voice to convey credibility.
- If you refer a reporter to other team members, alert them. Let them know your key message and share with them any facts and figures you released. This will help us maintain consistency and credibility.
- Don't hesitate to use notes; listeners can't see you. They can, however, hear rattling paper, so keep the notes still.

What other types of radio coverage can we pursue?

Traffic reporters

Traffic reporters need accurate, real-time information. We provide them information via real-time traffic flow maps and cameras, press releases, construction traffic reports and phone calls. Traffic reporters help us as much as we help them. They keep traffic flowing by reaching an audience broader than we could ever reach on our own.

Public affairs radio

Radio stations are required to air public affairs programming as a condition of their federal license to use the airwaves. Most of these programs air on Sunday morning or night. They attract a small number of listeners. Participating in these programs can be helpful when you wish to influence policymakers.

Talk radio

Being a guest on a talk radio program is very different than acting as a source for a radio news reporter, even a news reporter from the same radio station. Talk radio thrives on interaction among the host, guests and listeners or callers. Talk radio programs typically like to present two sides of an issue and pit guests against each other.

Contact a communications staff member to help get you ready for talk radio. You'll need to prepare for talk radio like you'd prepare for a public debate. Have facts and figures at the ready. Find out who the other guests will be on the program. Be ready for callers to ask questions about related, but different topics. Anticipate what your opponent will say and prepare responses. Listen to the program a few days in advance to get an idea of the program's style. Practice, practice, practice.

Rush-hour disc jockey chatter

Rush-hour disc jockeys often use humor and irreverence to entertain their listeners. Listeners also find them trustworthy and familiar. Finding ways to get our messages out through disc jockeys can be difficult, but worthwhile. For example, Amtrak periodically provides free weekend train getaways to disc jockeys who talk about their trips on-air when they return to work.

Television News

Television is the most powerful media outlet for good reason. In addition to reaching the biggest audience, it offers moving pictures and sound. Television news is generally considered unbiased. Television news covers the breaking news of the day.

Stories are very short and airtime is precious. A half-hour news program includes at least eight minutes of advertising, which leaves only 22 minutes at most for news, sports, weather, lifestyle, promotional teasers and friendly banter. Stories must have an active, colorful, visual component and must be relevant to viewers to get on television.

Viewers like quick, easy-to-understand stories on television. As a result, stories are often presented in an *us vs. them* manner. Television news gets ratings by airing the latest, biggest story. Long-term stories or complex issues rarely make the cut. Television stations air news less frequently than radio, so television reporters are often interested not only in what's happening now but what's likely to happen next.

Stories must have an active, colorful, visual component and must be relevant to viewers to get on television.

Broad appeal

Local network television affiliates, like the local CBS station or the local ABC station, reach a broad audience that's much larger than any newspaper or radio station. Cable news stations, like CNN, Fox News Network or Northwest Cable News, reach a smaller audience but strive for broad appeal. Everything you see and hear on television is designed to attract and keep your attention and keep you from switching channels or, worse, from turning off the TV.

Ratings measure how many people are watching a television station. High ratings mean a television station can charge more for commercial airtime and increase their profits. Four times per year, in February, May, July and November, ratings are used to determine advertising rates. During these sweeps months television stations pull out all of the stops to attract viewer attention.

How does television news reporting work?

Assignment editor

The assignment editor decides what stories to cover and where to send reporters and crews. They usually meet with staff at about 9 a.m. on workdays to discuss and determine daily assignments. They're the first line of defense in the newsroom and gather information, such as press releases. They also manage crews in the field, listen to scanners and answer phones.

Reporters

Reporters often cover a certain type of story, but are rarely assigned a strict beat. They cover many stories per day and have little time to gather background information or history. They want to get the ten second sound bite they need and move on. Their photographer may do four stories a day and may not edit the video for the stories they shoot.

Producers

Producers put the stories in order for the newscast. They decide whether the story will be long or short, have a reporter or have no reporter. They write all of the stories in the show. They make sure they have the best sound bites and the best video. While they're important to the newscast, you will likely never talk to a producer.

Deadlines

Television deadlines are often immediate, but are driven by deadlines for scheduled news programs. Expect to work with television reporters workdays between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Don't forget that reporters cover many stories per day. Stations rarely schedule live news interviews. Northwest Cable News airs breaking news anytime. Don't be late! Or you won't get on TV.

Why would we want to work with a television reporter?

- It's the only way to reach the eyes and ears of a large audience.

How do you work effectively with a television news reporter?

- Don't forget the four steps to a stronger interview:
  - Develop and use your key message.
  - Make your information relevant to real people.
  - Use clear, concise language.
  - Practice the interview in advance.

Television reporters need:

- A news hook (something that makes this compelling to viewers today, something that makes your story something viewers just can't miss).
- Short sound bites that get right to the point.
- Interesting video and sound.
- The basics without lots of detail.
- Information about how the story affects the listener.
- What's happening now and what's next.
- A safe place for the live shot.
- A copy of your press release, media backgrounder or Web page. Don't assume that the reporter has seen these materials. The press release is probably on the assignment desk and was never handed to the reporter.

To become a preferred source for television reporters:

- Anticipate their needs. Be ready with your key message and key information. Have facts on hand.
- Provide accurate, understandable information. Recommend locations where they can get video to show viewers the news. Don't bother with history or technical background information.
- Call them when you have news their listeners need to know. Don't wait for them to call you.
- Return calls promptly. Don't be surprised by last-minute, drop-everything requests.
- Use plain language. Be yourself.
- Remember, what you say is only a small part of what television viewers will experience. Your tone of voice, clothing, gestures, facial expressions, energy level and what's in the background behind you tell them even more.

Tips for television interviews:

- Don't wear a hat or sunglasses. Some people are put off if they cannot see a person's eyes.
- Wear dark colors close to the face and refrain from busy patterns in your shirts and ties. White shirts close to a person's face can wash out color and busy patterns can distract viewers' attention away from what is being said.

- Beards, goatees or mustaches should be well groomed. Shave beforehand for evening interviews. A 5 o'clock shadow or otherwise unkempt appearances will distract from the message.
- Forget the camera. Talk to and look at the person asking the questions for a more relaxed and sincere appearance.
- Brevity of answers is important. Trying to tell a story in one breath won't work for the television medium and the other side of the issue may get a better quote. Let the reporter ask the questions and it will help shorten answers. The answers will sound fine on television and background answers can be provided at the end of the interview if there is the feeling that the reporter missed a question.

Interview Do's and Don'ts

Before the interview

- Note the reporter's name and publication or station affiliation.
- Be sure the right person is answering the reporter's questions. (If it is not you, or you're unsure, get the reporter's number and contact your communications office for referral).
- Let the reporter explain his or her story before answering any questions.
- Ask the reporter if responses will be taped directly from the phone. Radio reporters often conduct this type of interview so prep time may be needed. It is OK to explain you need time to study data or gather information and assure the reporter their call will be returned within a few minutes.
- Know from the very beginning of the interview anything said or written will be quoted or broadcast.
- Always respond promptly to media queries or refer queries to the region or headquarters' communications office.
- Ask when the story will appear or air.
- Contact the communications office and recap the conversation or send in a media contact report.

General tips

- Talking points - Prepare talking points on key messages. Read them, refine them, rewrite them and rehearse them. For any interview, three strong concise messages are usually enough.
- Be the source - Many stories are assigned with a tight time frame. This means a reporter often will have little time to research the story before the interview. Never assume the reporter understands the subject. Explain information as if it is new to the reporter.
- Be succinct - In radio and television, journalists want a spokesperson who expresses ideas succinctly. Reporters are always looking for the five or ten second quote that highlights the agency's side of the story.
- Know the angle - Be well versed in the subject. Ask the reporter in advance what angle he or she is interested in talking about.

- Use your messages - Prepare short, simple answers and easy explanations to anticipated questions in advance. Think in visual terms. Review talking points. Stay *on message*.
- Remember the aesthetics - If the interviewer is coming to the office, find a good visual location with a banner or logo behind the interviewee.
- Know the reporter - Read other articles the reporter has written. Talk to others who know the reporter. And, before the interview officially begins, try a little small talk with the reporter. Sometimes an interviewee stands a better chance of fair treatment if perceived as personable and human.

During the interview

Do:

- **Relax** - Stay relaxed and focused. Reporters never ask the exact question practiced, so be calm and ready.
- **Be cooperative** - Most reporters are just doing a job. Reporters are offering to tell the agency's story. Use their medium to further the message.
- **Beware of** *the pause* - Sometimes after answering the reporter's question, there is a long pause. Do not feel the need to fill in that empty conversational space with more details. Many reporters are experts at coaxing more information from a source through extended pauses in a conversation. Answer the question and wait for the next question.
- **Be brief** (especially when talking to radio or television reporters) - The technological constraints of the radio and television industries demand short, punchy stories. Help reporters by giving brief and to-the-point sound bites on the topic.
- **Keep it simple** - Don't assume even the most educated viewer will be familiar with the project or operations. Keep it simple or lose the viewer.
- **Include the question in the answer** - Since there will be no reporter in the story, the audience will not hear the question in the final feature. If the reporter asks why a roundabout is being built at a certain interchange, begin the answer with, "A roundabout was chosen for this interchange because…"
- **Avoid the bait** - Reporters can be curt. Don't be baited into a defensive reaction. The reporter is not an enemy or friend, just a liaison between the interviewee and the audience. Never be tempted to answer a question if unsure of the answer – it is OK to say, "I don't know" or "I am not the appropriate person to answer that question."
- **Keep the reporter focused on your side of the story** - Many times a reporter will ask questions that divert the interviewee from the intended message. Use phrases such as, "That's an important issue, but …" or "I understand some people have that opinion, however…"
- **Accentuate the positive** - In situations where an organization or individual has made a mistake, be honest. However, stress the organization's quick response once the mistake was revealed. Or, explain how the agency stepped up to respond to a negative situation.

- **Stay** *on message* - Use key messages, making two or three key points as early in the interview as possible. Continue to go back to those two or three points throughout the interview.

- **Stay** *on record* - Avoid going *off the record* with a reporter. Never say anything to a reporter that wouldn't be appropriate for the evening news.

- **Take the high road** - If an opponent is also present, avoid the temptation to rebut their comments. This dignifies their comments and detracts from the message.

Don't:

- **Memorize answers** - It is next to impossible to memorize lines and deliver them while looking and sounding natural. Respond naturally, as if an interested friend were asking questions across a table.

- **Speculate** - Guessing is never a good idea. If unsure, don't offer an answer, it only makes the interviewee look bad.

- **Argue with a reporter about a story's news value** - Reporters can be insulted if the interviewee thinks they know more about news than the reporter, even if there is every possibility that the interviewee does. If a reporter thinks something is important enough to call on, humor him.

- **Say "No comment"** - The phrase has a negative connotation. A "no comment" is a sure way to make it in the story as the source of the problem, not the solution. Instead, say something like this: "We can't say anything at this time" or "The details of that agreement will be available next week."

- **Stonewall** - Pretending not to know the answer to a question when the reporter knows that isn't true is not a good idea. The best advice is to be honest. For example, explain that the information will be available next week or that a different group has the final draft. Either way, make it clear the information will be available at a later date – so as not to be seen as holding back.

- **Refuse to be named** - Reporters should never offer to make you an unnamed source. If you can't stand behind an answer, don't give it.

- **Ask to see a story before it is printed** - Reporters hate to share drafts with sources. Reporters are not public relations writers and they resent the intrusion. If there is the feeling a reporter has missed your point, interviewees should follow up with the details in writing.

- **Joke with a reporter** - That same joke isn't funny when it's in the newspaper, especially if it embarrasses the interviewee or the agency. Assume everything said to a reporter is going in the story, including off-color jokes or flippant references to the new tax increase.

Chapter 5

Web Communications

Lead with the Web

The WSDOT website is our primary way to directly reach audiences with our information unfiltered by other sources. How powerful is it? In 2008, the site served up nearly 390 million page views.

Our site is designed to help people get the information they want and our site points to other places where the public can learn more about what we do. The site is designed and tested to ensure speed, accessibility and readability.

Web communications today is now more than just managing and maintaining a single Web page. WSDOT has developed several on-line tools to expand the public's access to information and to forge more robust two-way communications. WSDOT maintains a corporate blog and accounts with Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, SlideShare and Facebook. These social media tools have proven critical in our ability to communicate with the public during emergency weather events and during routine public involvement processes.

This doesn't happen by accident. Organizing the myriad information WSDOT has online for public consumption is an ongoing challenge. It is done with specific criteria under the direction of the WSDOT's HQ Communications group – experts who study issues specific to communicating in a virtual environment. The guidelines online at www.wsdot.wa.gov/communications/WebToolKit will help you create Web pages that draw people in and answer their questions.

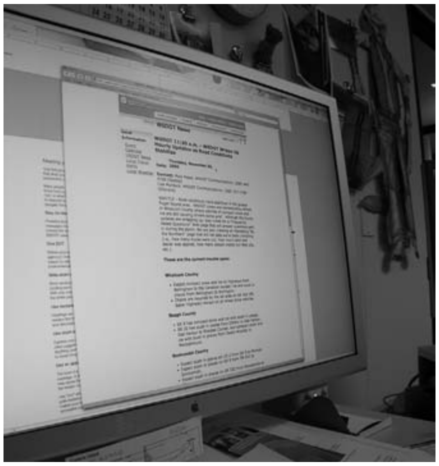
When we post information to our website before we release it publicly, we are reinforcing to people that our website is timely, current and reliable. This is critical to the relevance of the entire site.

Website Planning

Define your audience and goals

- Who uses your site? (The general public is not an audience be more specific.)
- What are your customers looking for when they visit your site?
- How can you make it easy for them to find the information they seek or accomplish their task?

If what you are trying to accomplish will require more than a website, then it's a great idea to develop a Communication Plan (see page 11).



Do it right the first time

Remember to keep the Web page simple and organize it well. websites are never finished – they are living, breathing things that need daily care and feeding. The better you plan and organize your site and the better you develop your content, the easier and less time-consuming the site will be to maintain.

Determine Web content

Next you'll want to organize your content and page details.

- What is the title of the website? (Keep it short and easy to remember.)
- What information will the site contain?
- Does the content already exist elsewhere? Where?
- Is there related content? If so, where? Have you collaborated with owners of sites with duplicate or related information? (If you answer "no" to this one, please do the collaboration now before going any farther. To show we are an efficient agency, we need to avoid having the same information show up in multiple locations.)
- Where should your site live? Should your site be internal or external? If the public and WSDOT staff need to access your information, put it on the Internet. If ONLY WSDOT staff need to access the information, put it on the intranet.
- Avoid posting content on both the intranet and Internet. This costs the agency extra money and is unnecessary. For example, if you have content that needs to show up in three places on the Internet, post it once in the most obvious location and provide links to it from the other locations.
- What tasks are to be completed on this site? Why will people use this site and why will they return to it?

Develop site structure

Once you've outlined the content of your site, you need to determine how your site will be structured.

Here are some things to consider regarding site structure:

Information Architecture (IA) is the art and science of structuring, organizing and labeling information so that content owners can better manage it and users can find what they are looking for. Unorganized content is cited as one of the largest causes of content management failure. Content Management System (CMS) and Web usability is most successful when information architecture is developed and followed across the site.

- 3-Level Rule – Navigation should not be deeper than three folder levels. If this is an issue, think about how you can reorganize your content to stay above three folders or less.
- By Subject - Not Office – Organize content by subject. Users should never have to understand our business structure in order to find content.

Six specific elements that are of particular importance when writing for the Web:

1. ***Use "chunking." Group your content in digestible pieces.***
2. ***Organize information. Put the most important content first.***
3. ***Edit carefully.***
4. ***Spacing. After a period, use one space only.***
5. ***Links and navigation. Many search engines rely on key words in text to serve up content.***
6. ***Omit irrelevant information.***

Complete a Sticky Note exercise

The easiest, most professional way to organize your content and develop your site structure is to do a ***sticky note*** exercise. Write the name of each subject area the site needs to address on a post-it note; use one post-it per subject. Repeat until you have one post-it note for each subject area.

Gather your team and start putting the post-its on the wall into logical groups. When you are finished, you'll have your information categorized.

Naming files

- Name each page clearly. Use basic words that are simple to understand.
- Make sure the page title matches the verbiage used for links.
- Use the page name ***default*** for main page in channel or folder.
- Each page must have a unique name and a unique page title.
- Do not use spaces in your name, they are replaced with %20, which makes a URL cumbersome and less useful.
- Do not use any characters or symbols, except an underscore _.
- Aim for a one word page name. If two words are needed, capitalize the first letter of each word. For example: InformationArchitecture.
- Be sure to use wording in page titles that users would use to search for the page. If your content is about a project on I-5 make sure the terms ***project*** and ***I-5*** are in the page title.

At this stage, take a look at what you've done. Are there any gaps between your target audience and your subject areas? Will your audience look for that content in the subject area you've assigned it to? Take the time to close any gaps you find.

Remember: Simple content and navigation makes it easy for your customers to find what they are looking for.

Finally, determine your staffing needs.

- Who will compile information?
- How frequently will the information be updated?
- Who will put content onto the Web page?
- Who will review the page? Who will review the page in 6 months to make sure the information is still accurate and timely?
- Who will approve the page to go ***live*** each time edits are made?
- Who is the contact for this page?

Pitfalls to avoid

- If content isn't ready for some areas when you post the bulk of the site, don't create a page that says Coming Soon or Under Construction - just post that content where it goes when it is ready.

What's the feedback on our use of social media tools?

"Such a joy to say "I like how my tax dollars are being spent!"

"Great job today!! Your Tweets are helpful. Good work incorporating social media into real life. I see a case study evolving"

"[WSDOT] is probably one of the most useful Twitter accounts I've seen to date…a great utility."

"Government Coming Alive...Here in Seattle, in the midst of a week of snowstorms, I've discovered some of that great government Web energy at the local level: the Washington State Department of Transportation has a blog, a Twitter feed, and a Flickr stream. The blog is remarkably friendly, the twitter feed is highly engaged (filled with responses to other people's questions and comments), and all of the Flickr photos are Creative Commons. Pretty amazing, and wonderful to see... it's got a lot of people talking, excited about government for the first time in, well, a mighty long time."

"Enjoying @wsdot tweets immensely. I hereby declare that this is state money well-spent."

"Now following wsdot. Pm-ed them and they responded. Anyone else feel like the gov't is full of people again??"

"This is better than watching the news and a lot easier to follow. Congrats and keep it up! Get a bonus for this!"

"Right now I'm following WSDOT on twitter where it's likely saving lives in this snowstorm by warning people."

"Getting a bit addicted to @wsdot's twitter feed (and flickr photos)"

"I really like the way that @wsdot is using Twitter and flickR today. Apparently, its flickR account is robust, with lots of photos! Kudos."

"@wsdot has been awesome this morning, especially since the website is slammed with traffic."

"Awesome idea being on twitter - this is the modern sort of government that I want."

Washington State Department of Transportation
Web Author Console
Switch To Edit Site
Intranet Home
Project Delivery
WSDOT A-Z
Employee Center
Data Drawer
Forms
Go
In The News at WSDOT
Working to Keep Traffic Moving
Ever Thought About Vanpooling?
Intranet Gets New Look, Features
Co-Worker Needs Help After Fire
News Archives
Resources, Information, Helpful Links
Data
Data Catalog
Intranet Usage Statistics
TDO - Transportation Data
Government
Cities and Towns
Government Sites
State Laws (RCW)
Employee Resources
Agency Info
Project Delivery
Regions / Modes
Links
FIND AN EMPLOYEE
Hot Links
Safety
IT Help Desk
GIS Support Team
Library
HQ Space Planning Update
SR View
Employee News
Local News for Your Area
Conference Reports
Upward and Onward
In Remembrance
News Archive
Featured Employee
Paula's Corner

Remember to keep the Web page simple and organize it well. Websites are never finished – they are living, breathing things that need daily care and feeding.

- Don't set up a site requiring constant updates if you will not have time to keep it current. People think weekly updates are a great idea until they run out of ideas or time to create the content.

Web Page Planning

The key to developing a useful Web page is to start by developing a plan for the page and organizing your content. For whom are you creating the page? What information will visitors to your Web page want to find? Careful planning will enable you to be sure you meet your readers' needs.

Once you've developed a user-friendly site, you must make sure the content stays current. Nothing is more frustrating to customers than visiting a website looking for new information and finding out-of-date, stale content. While creating your Web page, keep in mind that the information needs to be updated frequently. A static Web page does little to support WSDOT's brand.

Writing for the Web

People use the Web for two reasons:

- To get information.
- To perform a task.

The keys to developing successful Web content are much the same as any good writing. Here are six specific elements that are of particular importance when writing for the Web:

1. Use "chunking" and subheads. Group your content in digestible pieces. Small, bite-size pieces of information are the easiest to read on-screen. Use subheads that make it easy to scan and find information easily.
2. Organize information. Put the most important content first. Add content in order of descending importance. This allows the user to get the idea of what you are talking about before you get into details.
3. Edit carefully. Ask yourself the question, *So?* after you read a section. Does it make sense why the information is there? Should I care? Should I believe it? Did you provide data to support your points? Consider the *Aunt Gilda* test. If your Aunt Gilda, who only knows a little bit about transportation, could understand what you wrote then it's good.
4. Spacing. After a period, use one space only.
5. Links and navigation. Use words that resonate in the minds of your readers and clearly indicate what they will find when they click on a link. Avoid the use of *Click Here* in links. Remember that many search engines, including ours, rely on key words in text to serve up content. If you don't use the words your customers use they might not be able to find your information.
6. Do your housekeeping. Keep your information up to date and delete irrelevant material. Archive all content that doesn't have a strong business reason for being on the Web.

Using Social Media on the Web

WSDOT is receiving universal praise for its innovative approach to communicating to the public about our traffic information and agency projects and programs, using social media tools. The compliments describe how WSDOT has connected with people on a personal level, using a less formal and more personalized approach to communications.

WSDOT Blog: wsdotblog.blogspot.com

A blog is a website usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.

WSDOT uses blogging as a way to engage the public by telling them about what we do and allows readers to leave comments in an interactive format, which is an important part of many blogs.

Twitter: twitter.com/wsdot

Currently the most popular, this free networking and micro-blogging service allows its users to send and read other users' text updates (known as tweets) of up to 140 characters in length.

WSDOT alerts and traffic updates are sent to subscribers and received on their computer, cell phone or mobile hand-held device. This enables the user to adjust their travel plans or routes accordingly.

YouTube: youtube.com/user/wsdot

This is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. Videos allow WSDOT to show audiences footage of road conditions, storm damage, project simulations or other events and activities in a visually compelling way.

Flickr: flickr.com/photos/wsdot

This is an image and video hosting website and online community platform. WSDOT leverages Flickr's popularity by posting photos and descriptions of high profile events, construction projects and, most recently, the winter storm damage that occurred throughout the state.

Slideshare: slideshare.net

This is a presentation sharing website where users can upload, view and share presentation files.

E-mail updates (Subscription)

This is an electronic e-mailing list to which users can subscribe to receive regular updates. E-mail updates allow for widespread distribution of information to many Internet users.

WSDOT uses this to provide regular e-mail updates to the public about traffic incidents or other significant events. In the case of the most recent winter events, we continually updated the public about the status of road closures and conditions during the storms.

These "off-site tools" are alternatives to which the public can subscribe to access traveler information from a variety of sources. Because these sites are hosted outside of the agency, they are particularly useful in the event heavy internet traffic causes WSDOT's website to go down or load slowly.

Resources

Online Resources

Web Tool Kit

www.wsdot.wa.gov/communications/WebToolKit

Contact Web Help if you have any questions: 360-707-7079, webhelp@wsdot.wa.gov

Chapter 6

Graphic Design

Visual Branding

SR 20 Fredonia to Interstate 5 • Additional Lanes
I-5 Roanoke Vicinity Sound Wall Project
Project Update
State Route 539 Widening: Ten Mile Road to Badger Road
Totem Lake Freeway Station
Seven-Week Ramp Closure Delayed

It is important to maintain consistency in WSDOT messaging and graphic design to ensure readers recognize WSDOT products, which reinforce our brand.

Just a few years ago a visit to a WSDOT public open house was generally quite confusing. Without a uniform application of visual design standards or WSDOT graphics consistency, the information tended to be presented in a mishmash of fonts, photos, maps and engineering designs in varying levels of usefulness.

A table covered in brochures might have five or six different versions of WSDOT's logo or even worse no logo at all. Materials often featured strange colors for a transportation organization – variations of red or purple. The materials were working against each other instead of creating a cohesive presentation of information.

The agency's visual brand – from logo usage; to color theory; to how to build charts, maps and other graphics - is absolutely critical to delivering information to the public. This is important for both print and electronic design products.

It is important to maintain consistency in WSDOT messaging and graphic design to ensure readers recognize WSDOT products, which reinforce our brand. Our products should reflect the basic concepts of project delivery and accountability – the basic tenets of the open communications for which we strive with the traveling public. Graphic products should relate this straightforward approach and be designed with this in mind.

Our graphics should:

- Relate information clearly and accurately.
- Be consistent in how we display information.
- Efficiently portray information.
- Include necessary elements so readers can fully comprehend data or other information.
- Support the words and messages the product is meant to convey.

Graphic Standards at WSDOT

No two graphics are exactly the same. But following the agency guidelines for logo usage, maps, photos and color theory will make it easier for the public, media and elected officials to get the information they desire and to understand our business.

For assistance with graphics, contact the department at 360-705-7712 or 360-705-7423 and schedule a meeting to discuss your needs.

To find out if your materials comply with agency standards, send an electronic version of your product to the following:

E-mail graphic requests to: graphics@wsdot.wa.gov

E-mail project map requests to: mapgraphics@wsdot.wa.gov

Graphic design contacts:
wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/Graphics/

Logo Standards

WSDOT Logo

As part of the Executive Council action of June 23, 1999, the official Washington State Department of Transportation logo is to appear on EVERY official agency publication and Web page.

The two-line WSDOT logo illustrated below is the official standard. It is composed of two components, a circle T graphic and the logotype, and it is considered one element.

Washington State
Department of Transportation

Rules for logo use

- The logo is to appear in one color.
- The logo color is PMS 335 (green); If converting to CMYK for process printing use C=100, M=0, Y=65, K=30. It can also appear all black or reverse in all white. In certain instances when printing one color and that color is not listed above, it can appear in the one ink color or as a reverse image in the color of the paper. Please contact Graphic Communications if you have questions concerning logo color.
- The three-tone stripe historically used with the logo is no longer a logo element (whether reproduced in color or black and white).
- The logotype *Washington State Department of Transportatio*n should never be re-typeset.
- Helvetica is the primary font family for WSDOT. The Arial font family can be substituted when necessary. Do NOT substitute any font for the logo type Washington State Department of Transportation.

Rules for all Logos

Do NOT

- Change the size relationship of the logo elements.
- Squeeze, stretch or condense the logo out of its proportions.
- Substitute any other typeface, font weight or style in the logotype; logos should appears as illustrated in this manual.
- Print the logo in more than one color unless specifically noted in the standards for that logo.
- Outline the logo.
- Combine other elements with the logo.
- Attempt to re-create the logo.
- Add other words to the logotype.

Logo downloads

All logos are available for downloading at:

wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/Graphics/Logos

If you are outside of WSDOT and would like to request a logo, or if you have a question concerning logo use, contact Graphic Communications at:

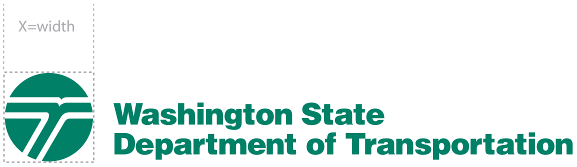
360-705-7712 or 360-705-7423

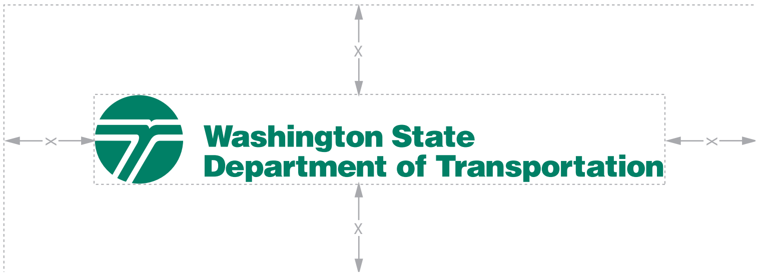
e-mail graphics@wsdot.wa.gov

Clear space

A clear space equal to the width of the circle T should be maintained around the entire logo. This helps to preserve the integrity of the identity and to prevent other forms from being incorporated into the logo.

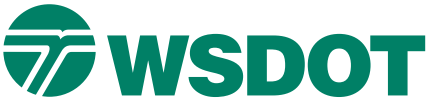
The clear space requirement does not apply when divisional names are used with the logo.


X=width
Washington State
Department of Transportation


x
x
x
x
Washington State
Department of Transportation

Acronym Logo

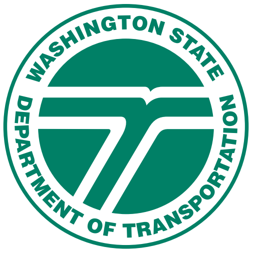
- The acronym logo can be used when space is limited, or logo size is visually impaired.
- It is the suggested logo for use on highway signage where movement of traffic affects the public's ability to make a visual identification.
- It is the suggested logo for video traffic cameras, TV footage by-lines and similar circumstances where limited exposure affects the ability to take a visual impression.



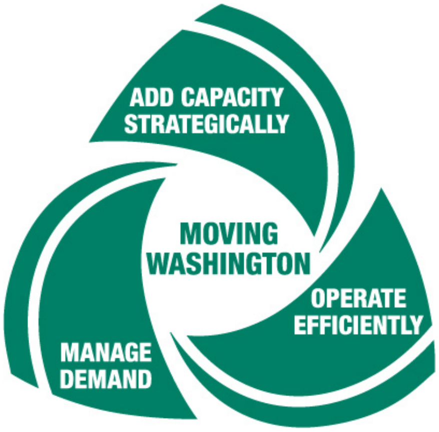
- Suggested logo for small items and advertising specialties like pins, pens, key chains, etc.

Seal logo

The seal logo is used only for special purposes such as service pins, key chains, etc.


WASHINGTON STATE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Moving Washington Logo


ADD CAPACITY STRATEGICALLY
MOVING WASHINGTON
OPERATE EFFICIENTLY
MANAGE DEMAND

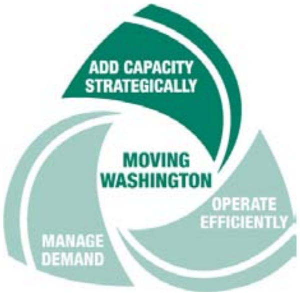
Moving Washington represents a WSDOT program to fight congestion utilizing three key strategies; adding road capacity strategically, operating the system we have efficiently, and providing choices that help manage demand.

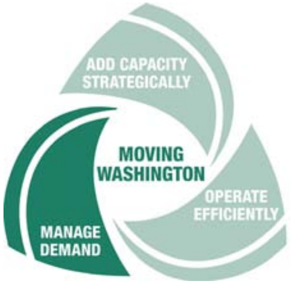
As with any brand it is important to follow standards when presenting products and materials to the public.

Moving Washing Identity

The Moving Washington identity is to appear in one color, green as illustrated (PMS 335). If not printing in color, the logo may also appear in black.

- The type/font inside of the identity is part of the design and should not be changed nor should the identity shape be used without the text elements.
- Constrain proportions when re-sizing the identity so elements remain in equal proportion to each other.
- An identity “strategy” can be emphasized by fading remaining “strategy elements” back to a 30% tint, as illustrated to the right.
- The Moving Washington identity should never be used as a substitute for the WSDOT logo.
- All products utilizing the Moving Washington identity, either graphically or in text form, should have the WSDOT logo included as part of the communication. This includes electronic, print or Web communications.
- Position and placement of the WSDOT logo in relation to the Moving Washington identity is flexible; however, the WSDOT logo should be prominently displayed in its correct format. The WSDOT logo should not be obstructed by any element of the Moving Washington identity.

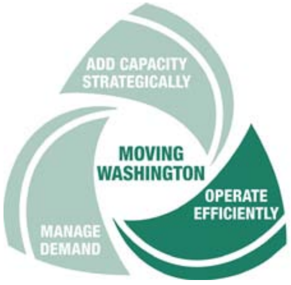

ADD CAPACITY STRATEGICALLY
MOVING WASHINGTON
OPERATE EFFICIENTLY
MANAGE DEMAND


ADD CAPACITY STRATEGICALLY
MOVING WASHINGTON
OPERATE EFFICIENTLY
MANAGE DEMAND

Moving Washington Text

When using text only as in a header or as a design element, type should be set in Arial Bold (or Helvetica Bold) ONLY, in upper and lower case; NO italics or other type treatments should be applied. If printing in color, Moving Washington text should appear as PMS 335 green. Text should appear as illustrated:

Moving Washington


ADD CAPACITY STRATEGICALLY
MOVING WASHINGTON
OPERATE EFFICIENTLY
MANAGE DEMAND

The exception to this rule would be when text is in a paragraph of copy. In that instance Moving Washington should be set in the same type style and font as the paragraph text.

To download electronic files go to:
wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/Graphics/MovingWashington/

Amtrak® *Cascades* Logo

The Amtrak® *Cascades* logo as illustrated below is the official standard.

Amtrak CASCADES®

Rules for Amtrak® *Cascades* logo use

- The logo is two colors.
- Logo colors are PMS 560 (Cascade Evergreen) and PMS 730 non metallic or PMS 875 metallic (Cascade Nugget). The logo can also print black or the darkest color, or reverse in white, if printing in one color.
- The logotype Amtrak® Cascades should never be re-typeset.
- The logo can be reduced or enlarged but proportions and spacing must be maintained.

Text in a paragraph

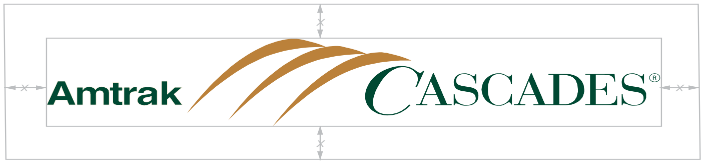
When using the text Amtrak® *Cascades* in a paragraph the text *Cascades* should be italicized.

Helvetica or Arial is strongly preferred as the typeface for all text copy. In most cases the copy should be set flush left, ragged right and in upper and lower case. Alternative typefaces should be carefully considered for compatibility with the logotype.

Bauer Bodoni should be used for headlines and subheads. However other typefaces may be used if they seem more appropriate for the design.

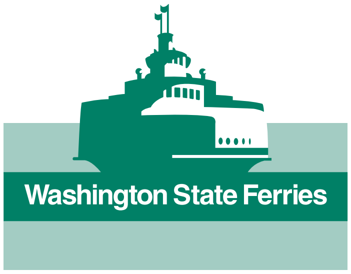
Clear space

A clear space equal to the height of the letter A in Amtrak should be maintained around the entire logo. This helps to preserve the integrity of the identity and to prevent other forms from being incorporated into the logo.



Washington State Ferries Logo

The Washington State Ferries logo as illustrated below is the official standard.



Rules for WSF logo use

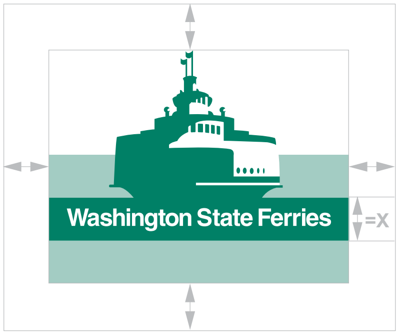
- The logo is one color PMS 335 (green). If converting to CMYK for process printing use C=100, M=0, Y=65, K=30.
- The logo can also print black or the darkest color. The screened areas of the logo are 30% of the one color printed.
- The logo cannot be reversed.
- The logotype *Washington State Ferries* should never be re-typeset.
- Do not use the *ferry* symbol by itself

Text in a paragraph

Helvetica or Arial is strongly preferred as the typeface for all text copy. In most cases the copy should be set flush left, ragged right and in upper and lower case. Alternative typefaces should be carefully considered for compatibility with the logotype.

Clear space

A clear space equal to the height of the center text bar should be maintained around the entire logo. This helps to preserve the integrity of the identity and to prevent other forms from being incorporated into the logo.



Jobs Now Logo

The Jobs Now logo has been created to communicate how our projects support jobs for Washington. It is illustrated here and should be used on all project highway signage.

For print or Web communications include it on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus projects only. Contact WSDOT Communications at 360-705-7423 for further clarification.

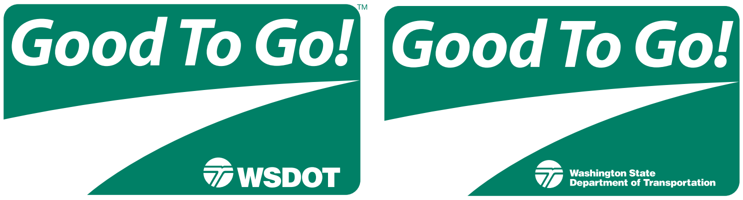
WASHINGTON
JOBS
NOW

Rules for logo use

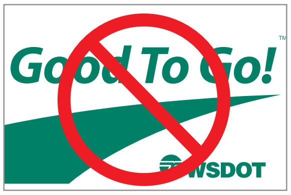
- The logo is to appear in one color. The logo color is PMS 335 (green). If converting to CMYK for process printing use C=100, M=0, Y=65, K=30.
- The logo may not be rendered in reverse. In certain instances when printing one color, the logo should be printed in black. If printing on color paper, the logo should be printed in the darkest color so as not to appear in reverse, i.e. ink color or paper color whichever is darker.
- The logo is to be used with the WSDOT logo.

Good To Go!™ Logo

The *Good To Go!*™ logo as illustrated is the official standard. The version with the WSDOT acronym should be used when overall size inhibits the readability of the WSDOT two line logo.

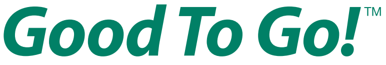

Good To Go!™
WSDOT
Good To Go!
Washington State
Department of Transportation

Rules for *Good To Go!*™ logo use


Good To Go!™
WSDOT

- The logo is to appear in one color. The logo color is PMS 335 (green). It can also print black, if printing in one color.
- The logo may not be rendered in reverse, as illustrated to the right.
- The logotype *Good To Go!* ™ should never be re-typeset.

An acceptable variation of the *Good To Go!*™ logotype may be used as illustrated below.



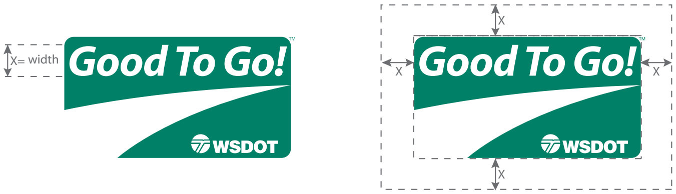
- The logotype can be used when space is limited or logo size is visually impaired.
- It is the suggested logo for video traffic cameras, TV footage by-lines and similar circumstances where limited exposure affects the ability to make a visual impression.
- Suggest logo for small items, advertising specialties, etc.

Text in a paragraph

When using the text *Good To Go!*™ In a paragraph, the text should always be italicized, each word capitalized and use an exclamation point, as illustrated.

Clear space

A clear space equal to the height of the letter G should be maintained around the entire logo. This helps to preserve the integrity of the identity and to prevent other forms from being incorporated into the logo.


X= width
Good To Go!™
WSDOT
X
X
X
X
Good To Go!™
WSDOT

Wave To Go Logo

The Wave To Go™ logo as illustrated below is the official standard.

WAVE 2GO CARD

WAVE 2GO CARD

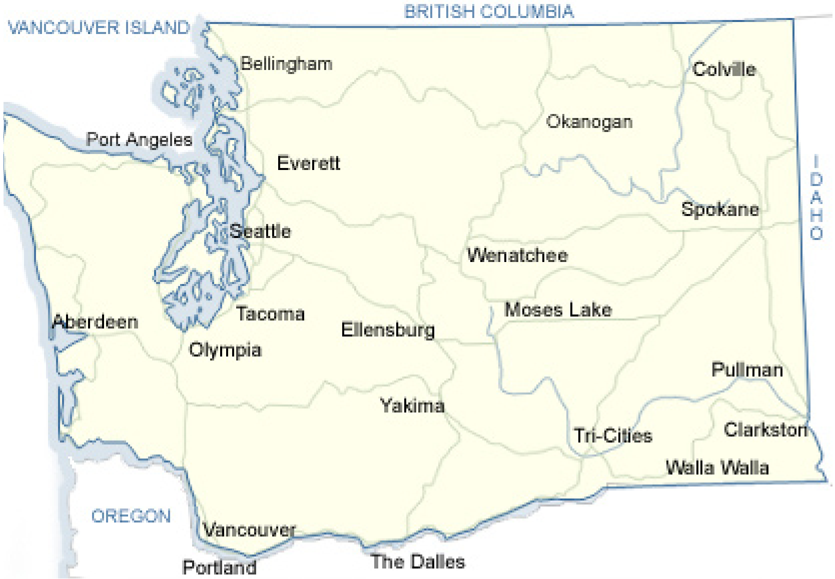
Rules for Wave To Go logo use

- The logo is two colors.
- Logo colors are PMS 369 (green) and PMS 288 (blue). It can also print black. When printing one color and that color is not listed above, it can appear in the one ink color.
- The logo may not be rendered in reverse.
- The logo can be reduced or enlarged but proportions should be maintained.

Map Standards

Maps

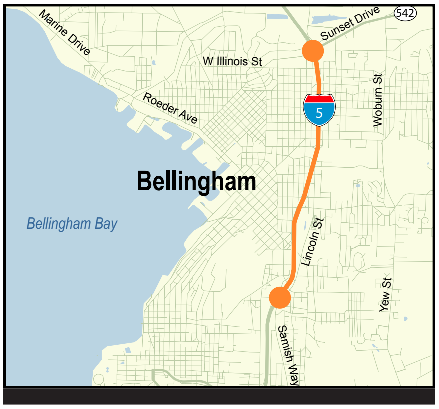
Using maps is an important way to illustrate details about your project location, phases, etc. WSDOT has developed map standards so readers know what to expect when viewing maps on the website or in printed documents.


VANCOUVER ISLAND
BRITISH COLUMBIA
Bellingham
Port Angeles
Everett
Colville
Okanogan
Spokane
IDAHO
Seattle
Wenatchee
Aberdeen
Tacoma
Olympia
Ellensburg
Moses Lake
Pullman
Yakima
Tri-Cities
Clarkston
Walla Walla
OREGON
Vancouver
Portland
The Dalles

Color maps

Subtle map colors have been standardized in order to facilitate the placement of project information and map graphic illustrations. The following samples are a reference for the WSDOT map brand. These standards are utilized both in print and on the website.

Land	State Outline	Water	Project	Roads	Border
R: 250 G: 252 B: 227	R: 51 G: 102 B: 153	R: 186 G: 212 B: 226	R: 255 G: 133 B: 43	R: 188 G: 204 B: 167	R: 187 G: 187 B: 188

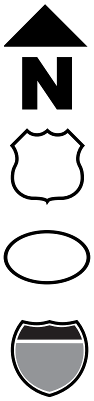

Marine Drive
Sunset Drive
542
W Illinois St
Roeder Ave
5
Woburn St
Bellingham
Bellingham Bay
Lincoln St
Yew St
Samish Way

Project detail maps

Project information is represented in orange line with dots at the beginning and end of the project. Projects that cover a small area or distance can be indicated with a dot.

Submit project map requests to:

mapgraphics@wsdot.wa.gov



Standard Map Symbols

North Arrow

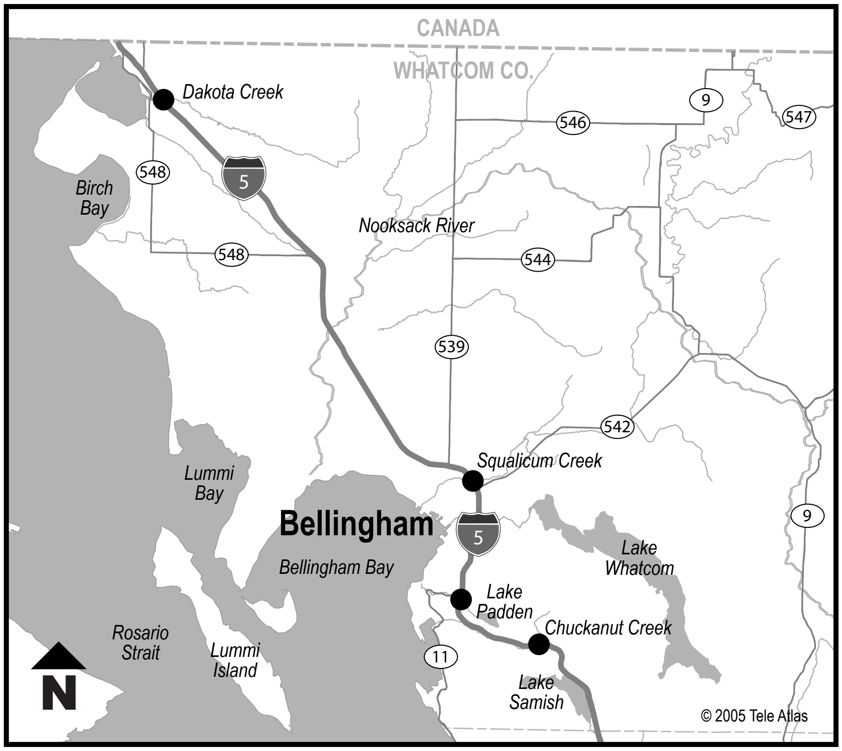
US Route Symbol (Route number goes inside symbol)

State Route (Route number goes inside oval)

Interstate (Route number goes inside lower area)

One-color maps

One-color maps are created in a tonal scale. The following samples are a reference for the WSDOT map brand.


CANADA
WHATCOM CO.
Dakota Creek
9
546
547
548
5
Birch Bay
Nooksack River
548
544
539
542
Squalicum Creek
Lummi Bay
Bellingham
5
9
Lake Whatcom
Bellingham Bay
Lake Padden
Chuckanut Creek
Rosario Strait
Lummi Island
11
Lake Samish
N
© 2005 Tele Atlas

☐	▨	▨	■	▨
Land	**State Outline**	**Water and Border**	**Project and Text**	**Roads**
White	40% Black	30% Black	Black	50% Black

Maps with an aerial photo background

When using an aerial photo as the base for map information or detail, the photo should be set to a lighter brightness, converted to monotone, or set to a percentage of transparency. Information should then be placed over the aerial photo utilizing colors as suggested in the color maps section (previous page). Construction areas are indicated in orange on maps. If additional colors are required to call out details or features, choose a palette that contrasts against the background. See color theory pages for ideas on picking a color palette. The project information or details should stand out and not be lost in the background aerial image.

General map guidelines

Gray scale or one-color tonal maps will work for most purposes – especially good for copying and faxing. Use the Helvetica or Arial font family, utilize font weights and styles to create interest and call out important information.

Graphing Standards

Charts and Graphs

As a general rule, charts and graphs are created in a width of 3.5 inches wide. The height of the graph can vary. This format works well in a two-column page layout and provides consistency in font sizes and line weights when inserted into a document. See also *half-size graph* exception later in this section.

Graph labels

The graph title should provide information on what data is illustrated. The sub or second level title would include further details or information if required. Third level title would be the y-axis label. Title for x axis would fall under the x-axis data. Source label would list resource for data contained in graph and would be last item listed along with any supporting explanation of graph data required. Legends or line labels would fall within graph. Avoid vertical labels.

Graphs in color

Review standards outlined in the color theory document when choosing a color palette. Consider using tonal increments of a color or color scheme. Colors should work well together and, like components of data, should be colored consistently across pages or products that are utilized together.

Graphs in one color

Use tonal increments of 100%, 80%, 60%, 40% and 20%, this works well in most dark colors or black. In addition, a combination of solid, dashed and dotted lines in varying line weights can be used to illustrate or represent data.

Graphing concepts

Consider the measures you want to convey with your graph or chart. This will effect how you display data to best illustrate performance reporting. Tables, graphs and charts can be used to analyze, monitor, plan and communicate. Consider carefully if the display of information is telling the intended story. Is information presented in a clear and uncluttered display? Are graphic elements confusing the information presented? Are labels and text easy to read?

Following are some samples on how you can present data clearly and utilizing different methods to tell your story.

Contact Information

For ideas on how to display information or data in a chart or graph contact:

graphics@wsdot.wa.gov

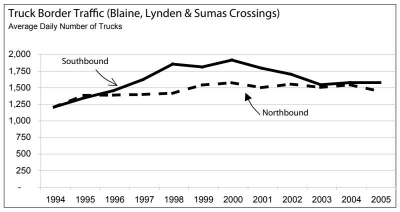
360-705-7712 or 360-705-7421

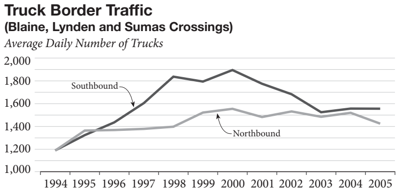
Notes on graphing:

- Actual point sizes on fonts may vary depending on graph size, generally differences are in 2 pt increments.
- Avoid placing text on an angle, keep all text horizontal.
- Avoid duplicate labels, example: days of month would be numbered on x-axis with subhead of May below
- Keep grid lines light and thin. This helps to display the data accurately and does not distract.
- Remove the generated legend and include it in the graph itself, or use arrows indicating the referenced data as in the line graph below.
- Never use the 3-D feature in excel to add dimension to bars.
- Never add excel generated data points (i.e., squares, circles, triangles) to line graphs.
- Little benefit is derived from coloring data. It is complex to put a good color in a good place. Shades of gray or the same color work best.
- Always include source information in all your graphs.

Changing the vertical scale

This example highlights the benefit of changing the vertical scale. The area represented by the numbers 0-999 creates wasted space. Making the scale 1,000-2,000 illustrates the information clearly and accurately.

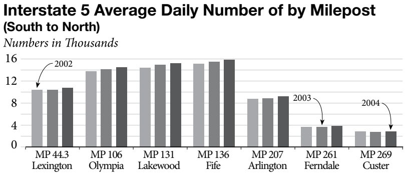




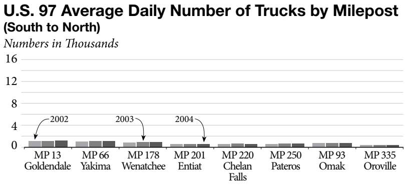
Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Statistics Canada. Data compiled by Whatcom Council of Governments.

Comparing visual data

Sometimes it is important to not change the vertical scale in graphs so that comparisons between two sets of data can be shown relevant to one another. Here both vertical scales represent the number of vehicles from 0 to 16,000. While changing the vertical scale in the U.S. 97 graph would have clearly shown that data better, the importance here was to compare the volumes visually between Interstate 5 and U.S. 97.



Source: WSDOT: Transportation Data Office.



Source: WSDOT: Transportation Data Office.

Graphing standards

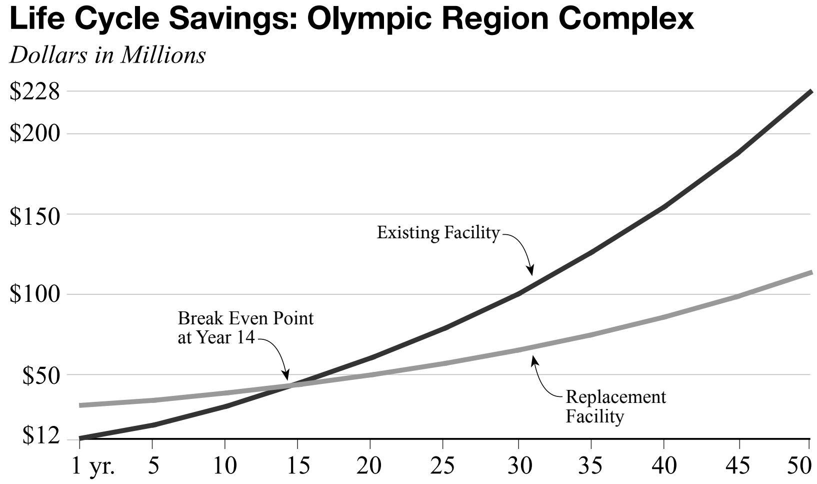
The following are meant to serve as guidelines for the creation of graphs for WSDOT. Some deviation from these standards may occur in line weights, fonts and font sizes and graph width, based on the actual use or required consistency in design of your end product.

- Headlines: Helvetica or Arial Bold 10 pt.
- Sub-Heads: if required are 8 pt.
- Vertical axis title: Placed on the horizontal under the Headline or Sub-Head, Times Roman Regular Italic 8 pt. or similar serif font.
- Vertical/horizontal axis: Times Roman Regular 8 pt. or similar serif font.
- Horizontal grid lines are 0.25 line weight. Data is displayed more clearly when background reference elements do not overwhelm the information.
- Use curved arrows when labeling data lines so they will stand out from horizontal and vertical grid lines. Avoid placing text vertically or at an angle.
- Source information: Times Roman Regular 6 pt. or similar serif font.
- Horizontal axis line: 100% black, 0.5 line weight. The tick marks below the horizontal axis are 0.25 line weight.

Line chart

Data lines illustrated in gray scale increments.

In this example the scale of the graph does not show the lowest and highest numbers to make better use of space.



Life Cycle Savings: Olympic Region Complex

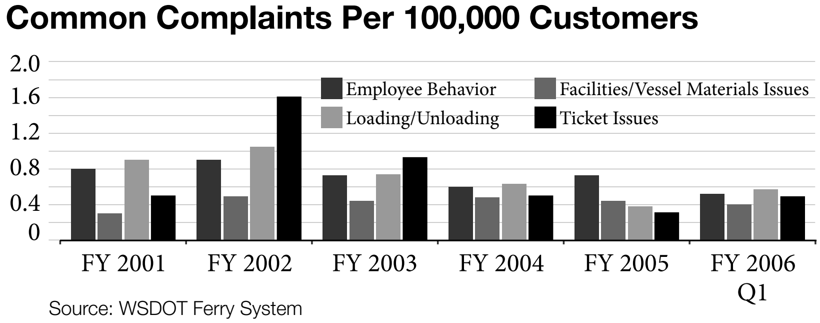
Dollars in Millions

Source: WSDOT Capital Facilities

Bar Chart

Do not use three-dimensional bars, keep information clean and simple.

Include the legend within the graph.

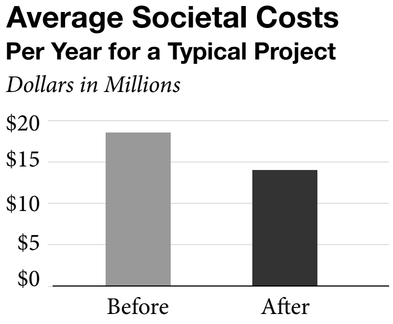


Common Complaints Per 100,000 Customers

Source: WSDOT Ferry System

Half-size graph

When there is little information to illustrate, a half-size version graph can be used. In some instances where data is limited or space is minimal, it may be better to communicate the data in a table or short sentence.



Average Societal Costs

Per Year for a Typical Project

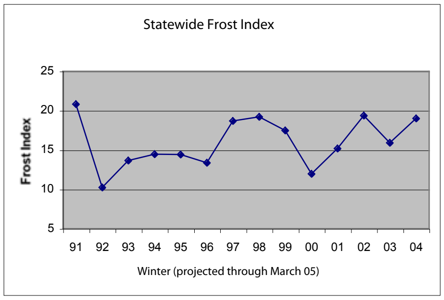
Dollars in Millions

Source Information: WSDOT Corridor Program

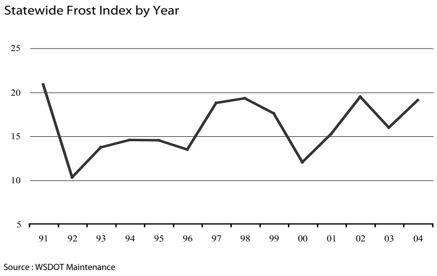
Remove unnecessary elements.

- Remove Excel Chart junk See Graphs below.
- Do not place graphics or photos in the background of the graph.
- Do not illustrate graphs in 3-D or use cartoon icons.

Excel Before



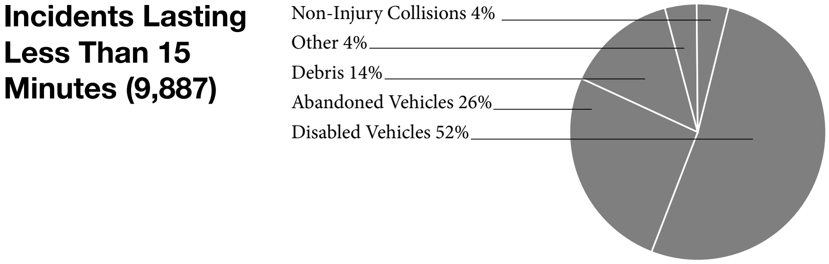
Excel After



Pie chart

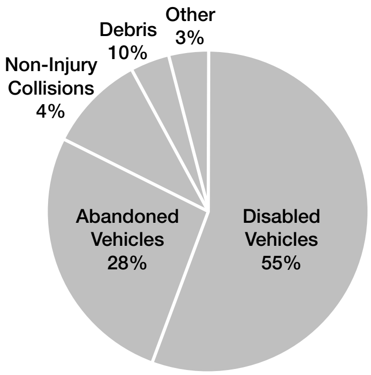
Display pie pieces in a descending value order clockwise.

Pie pieces can also be displayed in tonal scale increments.



Injury Collisions, Fire and Haz-Mat were less than 1% and are not shown in the above pie chart.

Display the call out information in a column layout with lines as shown above, or include them in the appropriate 'slice' as illustrated in the example to the right.



Graphs in excel

Excel graphs can be adjusted to conform closely to standards.

- Use sans serif font (Arial or Helvetica for title) and vary font weight. Use serif font (times or similar) as illustrated for subheads, axis labels.
- Select entire graph, choose format/chart area, Line - set to no line or white, Font - set to serif font (times roman or similar), 8 pt.
- Select graph heading, choose format/chart title, Font - set to sans serif font (arial or similar), 10 pt., drag over text or click for insertion point to edit title or add additional text, hit the return key and add sub-head (if required) in sans serif/8 pt., hit return key and add y-axis label in 8 pt. serif text. Delete vertical or y-axis label after it has been added to horizontal text box with graph heading.
- Select x-axis title, choose format/axis title, drag over text or click for insertion point to edit or add additional text, if necessary, hit return key and add graph source information in sans serif 6-8 pt. on the next line.
- Select plot area box, choose format/selected plot area, Fill - set to no fill or white, Line - set to no line or white
- Select data line, choose format/selected data series, Line - set to black, grey or color, choose dashed or line style, select 2 pt. weight, Marker - set to no marker
- Select y-axis line, choose format/selected axis, Line - set to no line or white
- Select x-axis line, choose format/selected axis, Line - set to black or grey, weight 1 pt.
- Select grid lines, choose format/selected grid lines, Line - set to black or grey, style set to lightest width, weight 0 pt.

Digital Photos

Photos

Digital photos are composed of tiny dots (also called pixels). The more dots per one-inch line, the sharper the image. An image that is 3” x 5” in size, at 72 dots per inch (dpi), is composed of 216 x 360 pixels. It may look reasonable at 5 inches wide, but if you enlarge it to 7 inches wide it still contains the same 216 x 360 dots but now there are only 51 dots per inch.

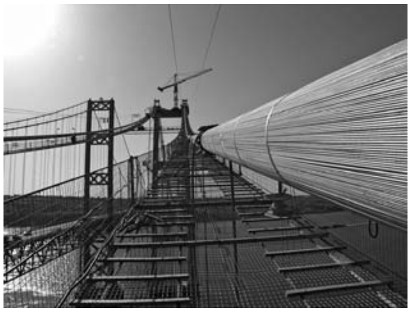
General photo guidelines

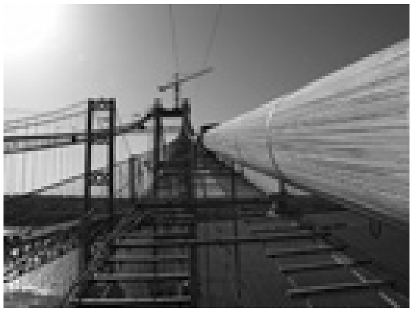
Using low resolution photos for print can result in photos appearing out of focus or fuzzy. Digital cameras generally have a number of resolution settings that affect the quality of a digital image. Make sure your camera is set at a high resolution and make any adjustments to photo resolution on a duplicate copy of your photo in a photo manipulation software. High resolution photos can always be converted to low resolution photos but the reverse is not true without a drastic loss of image clarity.

Printing photos

Most laser printers print at either 300 or 600 dpi. Generally, digital photos will still print well as low as 160 dpi to 240 dpi at actual size. Print colors can vary from printer to printer depending on how the printer is calibrated.

For print, the resolution of your photo is extremely important. A photo might look good on your screen or on a laser printer but may not look sharp when offset printed. Scans and photographic images must be of sufficient resolution to print on a press with good results (300 dpi is the suggested minimum size).


High Resolution 300 dpi


Low Resolution 72 dpi

The Graphics department at Headquarters maintains an extensive image library. In most cases you can link directly to their archives to retrieve photos for your use. If you have photos of interest relating to WSDOT events or projects please be sure to forward high resolution copies to be added to the library. Send files to graphics@wsdot.wa.gov or if you have a collection of photos send them on disk to MS47327.

The recommended resolution for print is 300 dpi (dots per inch). The resolution for the Web is usually 72 dpi. Photos can be easily downsized for Internet purposes to facilitate page loading. If a Web suitable photo is utilized for print, it will generally appear fuzzy especially if the photo has to be enlarged. When reducing photo resolution for the Web, it is a good idea to retain a high resolution copy of your image for print purposes.

File formats for photos and graphics

TIFF: (Tagged Image File Format) Used for images, including photographs and line art. Good for files shared between Windows and Mac computers.

JPEG or JPG: (Joint Photographic Experts Group - Compressed format) The format most commonly used for photographs but not always the best file type depending on image resolution and size. Not well suited for line drawings or iconic graphics. JPEG images for print should be at least 300 dpi resolution. For use on the Web a copy of the JPEG image should be sized down to 72 dpi. (Never resize the original high resolution photo file, always work with a copy.)

WMF: (Windows Meta File) A vector graphics format that allows the inclusion of raster graphics for windows.

EPS: (Encapsulated PostScript) Typically used for graphic line art images or iconic graphics (Vector art). Allows for image re-sizing without loss of quality or sharpness. EPS images may visually appear jagged on the computer screen; however, printed files should be clear and sharp no matter how many times they have been scaled or re-sized.

GIF: (Graphics Interchange Format) Suitable for sharp-edged line art (such as logos) with a limited number of colors. Suitable for Web (RGB) graphics.

PNG: (Portable Network Graphics) A bitmap image format created to improve and replace the GIF format, suited for using in Microsoft office documents/files.

PDF: (Portable Document Format) Most appropriately used to encode the exact look of a document in a device-independent way. While a PDF can describe very simple one page documents, it can also be used for complex documents with many pages that use a variety of fonts, graphics, colors and images. Works with Windows or Mac computers.

Color Theory

Using Color Effectively

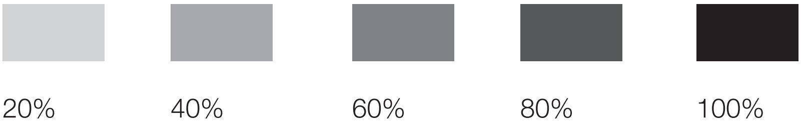
Choose your color palette carefully when creating graphics for WSDOT. Consistent use of color(s) can support a *brand*.

In the case of WSDOT the color Green, PMS 335 (R=0, G=129, B=102 or C=100, M=0, Y=65, K=30) is the primary WSDOT identity color.

Consistent use of a specific color, color palette or scheme can serve to provide branding for materials that are used together in a presentation package. This may consist of a number of materials on a topic or relating to a specific project.

Color can also be used to code similar types of information in graphs or graphics, from one product to another. Think of ways to use color to organize your data or relate corresponding pieces of information. Be careful however to not let color overwhelm the information being presented. Color should support the messaging, not dominate the overall product.

Consider using percentages of one color to create a tint or tonal range without actually adding new colors. Graphics created in a tonal range will typically translate well when copied or faxed in black and white. (Be sure to use increments of 20% or more for best contrast between tones.)



In some cases the use of color may not be appropriate; consider your audience, the topic and how the product will be distributed. Color typically costs more to reproduce and implies an expensive production. If your topic is considered high profile, includes a wide distribution and may have to compete with other full color publications, color may be warranted. A well-designed product can send a strong message even when produced in black and white or with limited color.

As a government agency funded by taxpayer dollars, the subliminal message implied by a prudent use of color can actually support the WSDOT brand of being accountable to the public.

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Colors in transportation

Consider what is implied by the colors you choose. Colors in transportation have specific meanings.

- Red = Warning or Stop
- Yellow = Caution
- Green = Go
- Orange = Construction
- Blue = Information
- Gray = Roads

Color marketing potential

Green—Fresh and cool; associated with nature, growth and hope, but also with money, environment, stability, loyalty, freshness and moving forward.

Blue—A cool color, it can hint at trust and reliability, peace, stability, loyalty, wisdom, tranquility and integrity.

Red—The color the eye perceives the quickest. Red can represent energy, speed, anger, danger, excitement, strength, power, debt, heat and warning. Red can also suggests aggression, hostility, stop or error.

Orange—A warm vibrant shade without being reminiscent of danger or aggression as in red, can represent energy, encouragement and construction.

Yellow—Warm and stimulating like the sun, encourages feelings of happiness and high spirits. It can be used successfully as a highlight but lighter tones can be difficult to distinguish.

Black—Can be seen as stylish and modern if used in the right way. It works well as an accent with other colors. Used in percentages, it can be used to illustrate data in gray scale tones.

Neutrals—Dark brown suggests masculinity, lighter brown suggests warmth. A neutral background allows for flexibility when used with other colors.

Colors to avoid in business graphics

Purple—Has links with religion, can also be seen as a royal color and therefore is often linked with spirituality and dignity.

Pink—Soft, nurturing and security. Used as a symbol of love and sweetness. Too much pink can be seen as childish.

Developing Printed Materials

Plan

Authors often skip the planning step, which makes their work more difficult and time-consuming and reduces the chance that their document will succeed.

For simple documents like an e-mail or letter on a routine topic, simply stop and take a moment to think about your document before typing.

For major reports, newsletters, Web pages, sensitive topics or unclear assignments, ask some questions before you begin and consider writing down the answers. If you're going to invest a lot of time in a document, (like a study, plan or report) it's wise to invest extra time in planning.

Documents that need to serve multiple audiences, multiple bosses or a team can be particularly tricky. You may want to work with the group, write out a plan, and build consensus for the document in advance. Getting those involved to buy off on a written plan at the start can help you reveal and resolve potentially time and effort wasting conflicts, uncertainties and contradictions. Planning your document, either alone or with others, is a wise investment. Answer these questions:

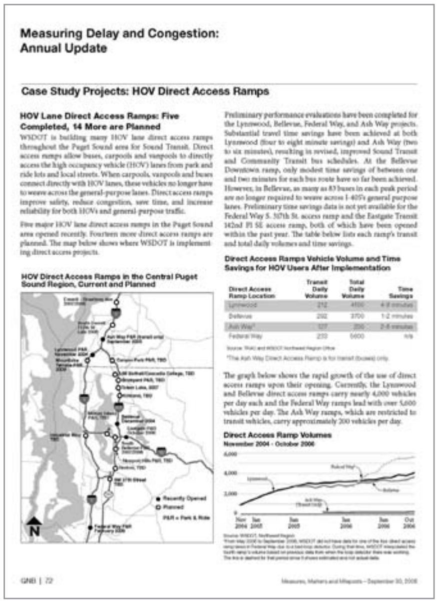
- What's the purpose of the document?
- Who is the document for?
- How will the document be used?
- What do my readers think now? What do I want them to think?
- What's our key message? What kind of supporting messages or arguments will be most effective?
- What kind of document will work best? Would a phone call be more effective than an e-mail?

Advocate for your readers

It's important to consider your readers when planning your document. Your job is to meet their needs rather than make the writing project easier for yourself. Take a moment to put yourself in your readers' shoes:

- What do they want?
- Will they quickly get the information they need?
- Is the information relevant?
- Did we address the readers' specific needs?
- Will different readers have different needs? If so, can we meet those needs in a single document or should we create separate documents?

Getting those involved to buy off on a written plan at the start can help you reveal and resolve potentially time and effort wasting conflicts, uncertainties and contradictions.



Measuring Delay and Congestion:
Annual Update

Case Study Projects: HOV Direct Access Ramps

HOV Lane Direct Access Ramps: Five Completed, 14 More are Planned

WSDOT is building many HOV lane direct access ramps throughout the Puget Sound area for Sound Transit. Direct access ramps allow buses, carpools and vanpools to directly access the high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes from park and ride lots and local streets. When carpools, vanpools and buses connect directly with HOV lanes, these vehicles no longer have to weave across the general-purpose lanes. Direct access ramps improve safety, reduce congestion, save time, and increase reliability for both HOVs and general-purpose traffic.

Five major HOV lane direct access ramps in the Puget Sound area opened recently. Fourteen more direct access ramps are planned. The map below shows where WSDOT is implementing direct access projects.

HOV Direct Access Ramps in the Central Puget Sound Region, Current and Planned

Preliminary performance evaluations have been completed for the Lynnwood, Bellevue, Federal Way, and Ash Way projects. Substantial travel time savings have been achieved at both Lynnwood (four to eight minute savings) and Ash Way (two to six minutes), resulting in revised, improved Sound Transit and Community Transit bus schedules. At the Bellevue Downtown ramp, only modest time savings of between one and two minutes for each bus route have so far been achieved. However, in Bellevue, as many as 83 buses in each peak period are no longer required to weave across I-405's general purpose lanes. Preliminary time savings data is not yet available for the Federal Way S. 317th St. access ramp and the Eastgate Transit 142nd Pl SE access ramp, both of which have been opened within the past year. The table below lists each ramp's transit and total daily volumes and time savings.

Direct Access Ramps Vehicle Volume and Time Savings for HOV Users After Implementation

Direct Access Ramp Location	Transit Daily Volume	Total Daily Volume	Time Savings
Lynnwood	212	4100	4-8 minutes
Bellevue	292	3700	1-2 minutes
Ash Way*	127	200	2-6 minutes
Federal Way	233	5600	n/a

*The Ash Way Direct Access Ramp is for transit (buses) only.

The graph below shows the rapid growth of the use of direct access ramps upon their opening. Currently, the Lynnwood and Bellevue direct access ramps carry nearly 4,000 vehicles per day each and the Federal Way ramps lead with over 5,000 vehicles per day. The Ash Way ramps, which are restricted to transit vehicles, carry approximately 200 vehicles per day.

Direct Access Ramp Volumes
November 2004 - October 2006

GNB | 72

Measures, Markers and Mileposts – September 30, 2006

Photos, graphs, maps, charts and other visual images can be extremely effective ways to convey information to readers.

Graphic Communications can assist you in developing materials.

Contact Information

graphics@wsdot.wa.gov

360-705-7712 or 360-705-7423

Multiple audiences, big challenge

Documents that serve multiple audiences with different interests are a big challenge. They're also very common at WSDOT. Identify your primary audience. Be certain your document meets their needs. Then do what you can to make the document useful for secondary audiences without harming usefulness for your primary audience. Many techniques that make a document more readable and easier to scan help readers find the information they need quickly, even if they aren't the primary audience. These include:

- Organizing writing to directly respond to your reader's concerns.
- Writing clearly and coherently.
- Creating clear sign-posts to help readers navigate your document, for example using headings, sidebars and bullet lists.
- Using plain language, avoiding jargon and minimizing use of acronyms including meaningful titles and headings.
- Presenting information in logical chunks.
- Telling your story visually using photos, maps, charts and graphs.

Research and Images

Research is often like peeling an onion, each layer you remove only reveals more. Researching a topic thoroughly can help you develop accurate, credible messages and information. Seemingly simple topics are often technically complex. Consider the potential payback and your other work priorities when determining how much time and effort to spend on research.

The communities and people we serve are also complex, diverse and constantly changing. Carefully consider your readers' needs and perspectives when researching a topic. Using somewhat related and easy-to-get information instead of information that's most relevant to your readers' can be more efficient, but also often sends the message that you're inattentive, lazy, imperious and evasive. For the same reason, don't assume that you must show off all of your research by putting all of the information you gather into your document.

- Was the level of effort appropriate to the significance of your document and readers?
- Is my document credible? Is the level of detail presented appropriate to my audiences?
- Did I research to obtain information that's relevant to my audience, not just easy to get or in my area of expertise or interest?
- Did my research reveal issues or information that may require me to admit fault, errors or needs?

Prepare images early

Photos, graphs, maps, charts and other visual images can be extremely effective ways to convey information to readers. Think ahead about what images will convey information and messages powerfully and efficiently. Start developing and gathering them early in the document preparation process. Images often take more time than expected to produce. They also often influence writers and editors. For example, a story effectively told using a photo or map often supersedes text. The Graphics department at Headquarters can assist with illustrations. They also maintain an extensive image library.

Organize

Before you start writing, it's a good idea to stop and decide how to best tell your story and most effectively organize your information. (See Chapter 2, Writing)

- How do I make my key message and information easy to find?
- How do I present my information in the most logical order and into easy-to-understand chunks?
- Are my paragraphs, pages and chapters coherent?
- Can I use headers or section titles to help my readers navigate?

Draft

Primary authors have the toughest job. Putting words on a blank page is difficult. Planning, researching and organizing your document help make this task easier.

- Will writing headings and subheadings help me break down the task into less daunting chunks?
- Will using questions as headers help keep my writing clear and focused?
- How does the text work with visual images?
- Is the flow of information logical and connected?

Review and Edit

Everyone needs an editor; a person with "fresh eyes" will catch errors that even extremely talented writers miss. Always have someone else review your material before stamping it final.

Reviewers and editors should do more than correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. They should also watch for clarity, cohesion, messaging, tone, order, plain language, compliance with WSDOT standards and other broad elements that help make a document effective. Remember, spell check does not proof-read.

Consider the read-once technique. Have someone read your document once through and put it down. What did they remember from it? What things stood out? Are those your key messages? If not, the document needs to be reworked.

- Is the messaging responsive, consistent and on-target?
- Is the tone correct?
- Is the information clear, concise and easy to understand?
- Is the information cohesive? Is it presented in an order that will seem logical to the reader?

Put your key message and key information, including findings and recommendations, right up front.

Copies of WSDOT publications are required by RCW 40.06. They should be sent to the WSDOT Library and additional copies forwarded to the Washington State Library.

- Are formatting, punctuation, tense and spelling correct?
- Is the author using plain language?
- Could you remove unnecessary detail or information?

Document Guidelines

Copies of WSDOT publications are required by RCW 40.06 to be sent to the Washington State Library.

WSDOT has guidelines for publications that were approved by the Secretary of Transportation and the Executive Board on June 20, 2000. Consider the following before commencing a document:

- Analyze methods of distribution.
- Does the method of dissemination best fit the type of publication?
- Should you use bulk mail, fax, electronic, focused mailings, etc?
- Develop the outline, schedule and cost estimate.
- Does the schedule take into account research, drafting, editing, graphic preparation and distribution time? Do the estimates include staff time, graphic services, materials, number of copies and distribution costs?

Cost control measures

Balance the effectiveness of publications with cost considerations when selecting format, color, type of paper or method of distribution. It is best to solicit print pricing options prior to having your product produced. (ie: one color, two sides, versus full color, two sides)

- Printed materials are double sided (where possible).
- Recycled paper is used as appropriate.
- Does not have the perception of being costly or self promotional. (Full color with color photos can be perceived as expensive when printed.)
- Heavy stock or glossy paper can be costly.
- Consider electronic vs. printed versions.
- Printed materials are mailed at the lowest rates (bulk mail).

Format and Style

- WSDOT logo is used. (Executive Board adopted graphic guidelines for official WSDOT logo.)
- The executive office that is producing the document is identified. (example: Northwest Region or Headquarters)
- Clear tables, charts, pictures, maps, graphs are used to make a point.
- Color is utilized on the graphs, etc. when it adds clarity.
- A contact person, their address, e-mail and phone number appear on the document along with a publication date (month/year) and website reference.
- Include Title VI and ADA language in your communications. For examples see www.wsdot.wa.gov/EqualOpportunity/PoliciesRegs/titlevi.htm
- Recycle symbol is apparent on each printed document.

Printing Procedures

Do we have to use a State Printer?

WSDOT staff and our consultants are required to use either WSDOT's Printing Services at Headquarters in Olympia or the Washington State Printer.

WSDOT staff and our consultants are required to use either WSDOT's Printing Services at Headquarters in Olympia or the Washington State Printer. Both printers offer a variety of printing options, can give you advice about printing and distribution, and help you fill out forms.

What are my printing options?

- **WSDOT Headquarters Printing Services** 360-705-7840
  printingservices@wsdot.wa.gov

  Located at the headquarters building in Olympia. WSDOT's Printing Services provides excellent customer assistance and offers quick turnaround on most projects by using equipment and resources available in-house. Printing Services employees are familiar with WSDOT printing requirements and timelines. They are a good choice for:

  - Color or B/W, under 3,000 copies.
  - Time-sensitive material.
  - Manuals or information material.
  - Posters, flyers, banners, etc. up to 42" wide.
  - Laminating and mounting of materials.

  For services provided and pricing: www.wsdot.wa.gov/printservices.

- **Northwest Region** – Some printing services are available in the lower level of the Northwest regional offices on Dayton in Shoreline. Contact the Northwest Region Graphics Office to coordinate printing at that location. Contact: 206-440-4029 or 440-4048.

- **Washington State Department of Printing** 360-570-5075

  For large and complex print and distribution jobs. Consider using them for:

  - Double-sided, 3,000 pieces or more.
  - Any off-set printing.
  - Odd shapes or sizes.
  - Any job that needs direct mailing.
  - Print jobs of more than 1,000 pieces that are not time sensitive.

  If they can't do your job in-house, they will competitively offer the job to private sector vendors. www.prt.wa.gov

- **Copy Services Contract** – The State Printer has contracts with printing companies. We are allowed to use these firms, who are pre-approved and offer discounts to the state, when:

  - You are located outside of Thurston County.
  - Your printing and distribution job totals $1,500 or less.

  The list of firms is available at www.prt.wa.gov/default.asp?p=serv_cont

  Be sure to use the Washington State account and list contact information clearly on all paperwork. WSDOT's Printing Services processes all invoices and must be able to determine who placed the print order. Request permission in advance from the State Printer if you wish to use these firms for a rush job that costs more than $1,500.

What forms are required?

There are two forms to use depending on the printer:

- WSDOT Printing Services in Olympia – Download the Printing Services Request form at www.wsdot.wa.gov/printservices
- **State Printer** - A-21 printing requisition

How do I fill out the A-21 form?

For assistance in filling our your A-21, contact WSDOT Printing Services at 360-705-7840 or Graphics at 360-705-7712.

What else will I need to provide?

- For direct mail services you will need to provide ZIP code information to the State Printer.
- You will need to provide your name, contact information and complete charge code (a charge code looks like: XL 5432, 70, 0101, 410101) for processing.

What do I send with the A-21 or WSDOT Printing Request?

If you have the graphics file ready, you can send it with the completed form. Always include a .pdf file or packaged art file with fonts and graphics attached or embedded in the file. This is important if you wish the printed materials to match your design. Without embedded fonts and graphics, the printing software will automatically pick a replacement font that will adjust spacing and appearance and uses low resolution images to represent graphics with broken links. It is a good idea to include a sample, laser printed or plotted copy of how the final product should look.

Where do I send the form?

It depends upon which printing option you're pursuing.

- WSDOT Printing Services in Olympia - Send the completed Printing Request and the electronic files to WSDOT Printing Services or deliver the form and job to Printing Services on the service level of the Headquarters building. Electronic files may also be sent directly to black and white or color printers located in Printing Services.
- State Printer in Olympia – Send the A-21 form and the electronic files to the State Printer by e-mail or large files may need to be supplied on a disk. Keep a copy of the completed A-21 form in your project file because you often have to do the same exact mailing with an updated flyer. It can save time if the State Printer does not have to look up an old file or file number.
- Copy Services contract – You will need an A-21 form completed prior to using the contract service. Contact WSDOT Printing Services to set-up your account.

Checking-in with the printer

Always follow up with WSDOT Printing Services or the State Printer to see if they have received your form and graphics files. Confirm your deadline date and expectations for the project. If your project contains a mailer, make sure the state printer is on task to send your mailer out so it arrives on-time. Then double check to insure it was actually sent.

Who can help design my document and get it print-ready?

Consider how much time you have, how many copies you need and how much the project staff is willing to spend. Consult with the Graphic Communications office for your graphic needs. They can design professional products that will meet agency standards and help you avoid common pitfalls and cost overuns. You will need to provide approved and edited text, and data for graphs and graphics required for your project. (See Graphics, Chapter 4) They can also review consultant work to insure it meets agency standards.

Contact Graphic Communications at Headquarters for assistance and review, at 360-705-7712 or 705-7423 or e-mail graphics@wsdot.wa.gov.

Direct mail

For direct mail through the State Printer, call 360-753-6820. Work with your project engineer or engineering manager to select and confirm ZIP codes and routes.

When you send the completed A-21 form to WSDOT's printing representative at the State Printer, you should also copy it to the direct mail professional at the State Printer. They will look up the ZIP codes provided and e-mail you a file of all routes in the ZIP code with a map of the area. Be sure to print this map in color, routes are shown in different colors. If the map includes two ZIP codes, you will want to differentiate between routes. Call 360-753-6820 with any questions about the maps. Consider using a Thomas Brothers Guide for reference.

Postal permit numbers

Make sure you have an active permit number and get permission prior to its use. Talk to your Communications Office colleagues or WSDOT graphic designer to get advice about permits.

Postal permits must have money in their account or the Postal Service won't send your direct mail pieces. Work with the WSDOT manager of the postal permit number you are using to get money into the account ahead of time.

Postal permit numbers are tied to a specific postal station. Your direct mail pieces can only be mailed from the home location of the postal permit number. Ask where the direct mail will be mailed from to prevent any problems.

If your direct mail piece will be bulk-mailed by the State Printer using their permit number, make sure the proof has the State Printer postal permit number on it, the A-21 form *bulk mail to routes in the following ZIP codes: 95823, 98232 & 98315, to routes…* etc.

Resources

Graphics

graphics@wsdot.wa.gov

360-705-7712 or 360-705-7423

Printing Services

PrintingServices@wsdot.wa.gov

360-705-7842

State Printer

Cindy Schultz

cindy@prt.wa.gov

360-570-5043

Chapter 7

Presentations, Public Speaking and Events

We've all sat through mind-numbing presentations featuring bland verbal recitation of bulleted phrases flashed on PowerPoint slides. While presenters may find the ease of using PowerPoint tempting, making effective presentations requires strategic thinking, advance preparation and hard work. Your ultimate goal: Relevant information artfully presented.

Should I Make This Presentation?

Effective presenters provide relevant information in a manner that engages and enlightens. That's a significant challenge, so don't take an invitation to make a presentation lightly. If you don't have anything meaningful to say, then don't make the presentation. Ask yourself some tough questions before accepting:

- Do you have important information to convey to this audience?
- Do you have time and resources to adequately prepare?
- Are you willing to make time and find resources to adequately prepare?
- Is this information truly relevant to this audience? If not, then decline the invitation. If so, get ready for some hard work.

Preparing a presentation is hard work. Planning your presentation well in advance is a wise investment. Ask yourself some key questions when planning your presentation:

- What is the purpose of the presentation?
- Who is the presentation for?
- How will they use the information I present?
- What do they know now?
- What do they want to learn?
- What's my key message?
- What kind of supporting information will be most effective or useful?
- How do I make this information engaging and useful?
- What should my audience see, touch, feel or take away with them?
- What kind of presentation will work best for my audience?

"PowerPoint allows speakers to pretend that they are giving a real talk, and audiences to pretend they are listening,"

Edward Tufte, noted information expert and Yale professor

"… clear-thinking, articulate people using PowerPoint are transformed into muddied, monotonous speakers who shoehorn thoughts into bullet points and anesthetize audiences with their slide shows."

Shane Harris, Government Executive magazine

Anticipate questions the audience may ask and address special concerns of the group. This will help you determine what information to deliver and how best to deliver it.

Note that these questions are focused on the audience not the presenter.

Analyzing the Audience

Before you give a presentation, be sure to research your audience. Anticipate questions the audience may ask and address special concerns of the group. This will help you determine what information to deliver and how best to deliver it. Consider these audience factors:

- mandatory attendance or not
- gender
- hostile
- media influence
- size
- group membership
- use of jargon

Understanding the group personality helps in maintaining control. Familiarity with existing attitudes and backgrounds of the audience can enhance credibility.

Audience feedback

Complete knowledge of the subject allows the speaker to observe audience activity. If the speaker is observant, he or she can direct the entire presentation by the feedback given. A speaker should recognize changes in the atmosphere and act on it. If feedback is negative, the speaker needs to remain flexible and adjust the presentation. Work with the audience, not against it.

The audience receives a visual response from the speaker and an emotional response from the speaker's attitude.

Begin presentations with ideas or concepts the group will approve and understand. This will lessen resistance if the audience is approached with a problem. The information given should be clear and directed to the audience. From the beginning the speaker should contemplate, "What response do I want from this group?"

Hostile audience

Some subject matter may be controversial and provoke hostility. Speakers who sense a group may be angry or upset should think about the group's point of view while preparing the presentation. Establishing common ground and showing agreement with the audience's beliefs is one way to defuse the group before anything gets out of hand.

Another tactic is to show up early and greet audience members at the door. Many times audience members will address their concerns up front as opposed to in the middle of the presentation. Addressing hostility at the start of a presentation will make your audience appreciate that you are aware of their concerns.

Speakers must never lose their temper in front of an audience. Showing sincere concern for negative feelings will gain the speaker more credibility.

Speaker Stress

Everyone, even professional speakers, experience anxiety when addressing a room full of people. You can learn to use this stressful energy in a positive way.

Relax

If your body is tense, any of the following can occur:

- The mind wanders, becoming difficult to focus.
- Errors increase.
- Memory worsens.
- Disorganization creeps in.
- Fatigue rises.
- Accidents happen.
- Speech is not fluent.
- Headaches and backaches.
- Irritability increases.
- Enjoyment of work decreases.
- Humor decreases.

Self-fulfilling prophecy

It's good to have the proper mind-set when you deliver a speech. Take the time prior to relax and visualize yourself giving a successful presentation. See yourself relaxed and poised in front of an audience that enjoys what you are saying. Picture yourself finishing the presentation. The audience is happy about what they heard from you and interested to learn more.

- See yourself leaving the lectern with people thanking you for your presentation. It feels good to give a successful presentation.
- Remember to take deep breaths as you visualize.
- If you can practice feeling successful, this will give you an edge by making you feel comfortable and relaxed. It may sound strange but it works.

Talking Points

Originally developed for those giving presentations to the Washington State Transportation Commission, this checklist may be useful with other audiences as well.

A checklist can help in two ways:

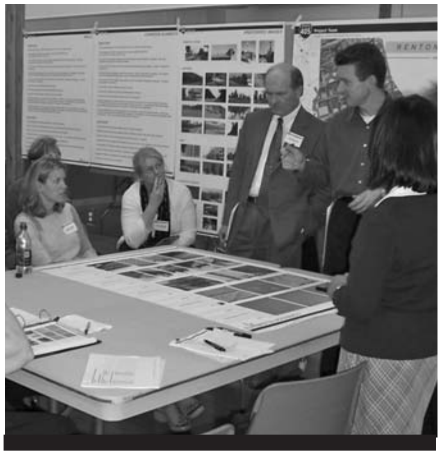
- It helps a presenter to focus his or her messages.
- It ensures that we are giving a consistent message to those seeking information about the topic.

Key Messages

Gather the information to answer the following:

- What is WSDOT doing and why?
- What are the two or three most important things that people should know?

Effective presenters provide relevant information in a manner that engages and enlightens.



Prior to creating visuals, find out what you want to say and develop an outline and a script. These guides will help you organize your content and plan. Don't make your visuals into a script.

- Is there other information that would be helpful?
- Are others (partners) involved or supporting our action/proposal/service? If yes, who are they?
- Where can the public get more information? Is there a website available with more detailed information? Are there reports or other background materials available to the public that supports our position?
- Where and how can they be accessed?
- What do you want the audience to do?
- How will they use the information you are providing?
- Will your audience be asked to approve or support a project?
- Do they need to ask someone else – such as a legislator or local officials - for support?
- Are they considering a recommendation?
- What action will be taken?
- Who needs to act and what are the possible outcomes?
- What are the next steps?
- If everything goes as planned, what happens next?
- If it doesn't go as planned, then what?

Guidelines for Visual Aids

Visual aids are not the presentation

There's a pretty clear procedure for developing a presentation. Prior to creating visuals, find out what you want to say and develop an outline and a script. These guides will help you organize your content and plan. Don't make your visuals into a script. The visual aids are props for your presentation. The presenter is in control, delivering information when and how he or she needs to. Visual aids which display too much information or are too intricate begin to demand control because the audience starts to study them. Cluttered visuals are also hard to see and distracting.

Start right

Make sure your software is set up with the right defaults. Slides and overheads are both wider than tall, but they're not the same shape. Use the WSDOT PowerPoint template to save time and keep consistent.

The WSDOT PowerPoint presentation template is available at:
wwwi.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/Graphics

Be brief

Break your ideas down into short phrases. Summarize. Use one idea per line. Less is more. Think about using bullets to deliver just the information you want. If you must say more, create separate slides.

Be clear

Say what you mean. Write to the point. Don’t make the audience guess. Show the idea exactly. Use only the right words and pictures.

Be consistent

Develop an outline and stick to it. Use the same words and pictures for the same ideas. Pick a color scheme and use it throughout. Put similar items in the same place on each frame. Using the template automates much of the work of keeping consistent.

Be correct

Check spelling and grammar. Make sure your data is correct. Use up-to-date maps. Verify your sources.

Eliminate detail

Eliminate all extraneous information. Simplify drawings, charts and tables down to their bare essentials. Show trends. Remember, the presenter will be there to explain. If your drawings require detail provide them with your handouts.

Make everything readable

All information presented needs to be readable, it’s distracting otherwise. It’s best to remove unneeded information.

Use the space

Use the entire image area, leaving some clear area around the edges.

Use the right type

- Use simple typefaces like Helvetica or Arial.
- Use medium or bold type styles, they show up better.
- Don’t use drop shadows, the text becomes hard to read.
- Use liberal and consistent leading (line spacing) throughout.
- Normally, blocks of text are left justified. Don’t justify on the right (the kind you see in books). Certain text can be centered.
- Size type appropriately. Headings are largest; subheads next in size, body text next, item descriptions and chart values smallest. But don’t use too many sizes and colors.
- Use upper and lower case letters.

Images

Use images to reinforce your message and to increase visual interest. Logos should be handled with care. Use them properly and unobtrusively to present the organization’s image subliminally.

Take time to test

Reserve time to test your visuals prior to the meeting. Test by projecting them at the location of the presentation. Walk around. Pick your most cluttered example and sit in the back. Save enough time to make corrections.

The Folio

An Alternative or Companion Piece to the PowerPoint Presentation

fo·li·o: *a large sheet of paper folded once in the middle, making two leaves or four pages of a book or manuscript.*

The folio is an important companion to the PowerPoint presentation. It also has proven value as a stand-alone communications tool. The folio can function as a take-away from your presentation where more in-depth detail can be provided. When creating a folio follow these guidelines:

- Include a date, Web links, e-mail or other contact information on your publication to provide the reader with resources for getting more information or to ask questions.
- Answer standard questions such as what, why, how, who, where and when that are relevant to your topic.
- The standard size of 11 x 17 allows for four pages of 8.5 x 11 copy (roughly 1/2 to 3/4 page of a word document, single spaced in the same or similar font will make up a full page layout with room for 2-3 graphs, photos or graphics).
- Black and white will work for most purposes – use grayscale for easy copying, avoid background colors or images (if copied or faxed, it might be hard to read).
- Set up your pages with consistent margins and columns. Set up or imagine an invisible or non printing grid. Align text, graphs, graphics and photos on this grid to create a consistent and uniform layout.
- Include elements like graphs, diagrams, maps, illustrations or photos that support your subject and are relative to your text. Refer to WSDOT guidelines for creating maps, graphs and digital photos in this publication.
- Photos tell a million stories – make sure you use the right one.
- Limit the use of too many font families in a publication. Create interest or call out specific headlines or text, with variations of a font, plain, bold, italic, etc. Display paragraph text consistently - flush left, flush right, justified, etc.

WSDOT folio examples can be found at:
www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/folio

Why Hold an Event?

Sometimes the best way to get the news out is to create the news. Schedule events and media news conferences to directly inform the public about our projects and policies.

While every event is different and needs its own planning effort, there are some basic considerations. Some events require an extensive planning period (six months or longer), but some events can be organized with very little advance notice. The following two-month event checklist is designed for typical WSDOT media events. The timeline can be revised to suit simpler or more complex events.

Meet with WSDOT team members and representatives from other involved agencies and organizations to discuss your event.

Two months out: Coordinate event

Meet with WSDOT team members and representatives from other involved agencies and organizations to discuss:

- The purpose of the event.
- Key message and news hook.
- Event date.
- Location.
- Event logistics.
- Speakers and emcee.
- Staff time and cost estimates (including money for invitations, souvenirs, audio equipment, stage, etc.) that require approval and funding from the project manager.
- Invitations, save the date notice and invitation list for dignitaries.
- Clearly assign responsibilities and deadlines, particularly if there are many people involved in event planning.
- Develop an event contact list, including vendors and project staff.
- Draft communication plan.
- Draft a communication plan for event and draft agenda. Send them to the Director of Communications and the Secretary of Transportation with a current project Web page for review.
- Share revised plan with your project team and others involved in event planning.

Develop invitations and souvenirs

Contact the Graphics Office graphics@wsdot.wa.gov or 360-705-7712 or 7057423 for help with invitations and souvenir if needed. Remember that producing souvenirs may need more time, depending on the quantity and the item. If the budget is going to exceed $5,000, you'll need to get approval from the Secretary's Office.

Develop invitation list, including:

- Federal and State Legislators, officials and staff, including regulatory agency representatives.
- County and local officials.
- WSDOT executives and key staff.
- Transportation Commissioners.
- Project team and unions.
- Tribes.
- Consultants and contractors.
- Community groups.

Prepare media materials

- Gather facts and figures to draft fact sheets about the project or program.
- Contact the Graphics Office for help with any maps, diagrams, charts, graphs or photos you'll need for the event or media kit. To submit a graphics request send an e-mail to: graphics@wsdot.wa.gov

Update Web pages

- Make sure all media materials are consistent with information on WSDOT's website.
- Gather any *before* data or photos needed.
- Develop financial information and be sure it's consistent on the Web, in media documents, etc.
- Prepare materials with key messages.

One month out: Coordinate event

- Confirm date of event, location, logistics and speakers.
- Finalize invitation list; consider sending a *Save the Date* notice.
- For media tours, consider the tour vehicle. Develop a map showing key stops and written directions for the driver(s).
- Develop a contingency plan, i.e. rain during an outside event.
- Visit event site during the time of day the event will occur; check visuals and media shots. Check the location and angle of the sun.
- Prepare highway advisory radio and variable message sign scripts.
- Send event cost estimates to project manager for approval.
- Arrange for electricity, food, beverages, restrooms and anything else you'll need at the event site.
- Get required approvals from on-site staff, land owners, etc.

Prepare media materials

- Draft media advisory for the event; get advisory edited, reviewed and approved.
- Gather quotes for press release.
- Coordinate media strategy with others in WSDOT and project partners.
- Obtain signage needed for the event

Two weeks out

- Mail invitations.
- Coordinate remarks with all speakers to make sure everyone says something different, yet not contradictory. Provide talking points if necessary.
- Make name tags.
- Update event cost estimates to project manager.
- Be sure project manager approves EVERYTHING, including expenditures and all written correspondence to the media.
- Coordinate event with HQ Communications Office 360-705-7075 to be sure event is the upcoming Project of the Week.
- Coordinate use of HARS (highway advisory radio) and VMSs (variable message signs) prior to and during the event.
- Draft press release and route for approvals.
- Complete all materials for media packets, including backgrounders, fact sheets, maps and diagrams.
- Update Web pages.
- Arrange for event photographer.

Two days out

- Send advisory to media.
- Make follow-up calls to the media.
- When pitching to the television media on the day of the event, paint a picture of your event for them, keeping in mind television is a visual medium.
- Pitch to both the photo and city desks at newspapers.
- Send advisory to the Associated Press and follow up with the editor to ensure placement in the regional daybook.
- Include specialty news outlets (business, Spanish-language stations, etc.), as appropriate.
- Produce and assemble media kits/press materials.
- Finalize news release for distribution the day of the event.
- Update websites, highway advisory radio and variable message signs.

- Schedule staff to update Web pages, CARS, 511, highway advisory radio and variable message signs on event day.
- Schedule staff to provide follow-up data or anecdotal information in the hours and days after the event.

The day before the event

- Make follow-up calls to the media.
- Make arrangements to distribute press release via e-mail or fax approximately 15 minutes after event is scheduled to begin.
- Visit the event site.
- Perform a sound equipment test.
- Check for electricity on-site.
- Install parking directional signs for event parking.

Event day

Pre-event

- Make reminder calls to the media.
- Resend media advisory.
- Arrange for press release to go out 15 minutes into event.
- Check Web pages, CARS, 511, highway advisory radio and variable message signs to assure accuracy.

Did you remember?

- Supply box
- Podium and stage
- List of RSVP's
- Cell phone/pager and media list
- Staff assignments
- Digital camera and extra batteries

Post-event

- Submit media report.
- Draft Express Lane article, include photos.
- Send follow-up e-mail to WSDOT staff reporting whether the project or policy is delivering expected results.
- Answer follow-up media calls.
- Update Web pages, CARS, 511, highway advisory radio and variable message signs to assure accuracy.
- Send thank you notes or e-mails.

Days and weeks after the event

Gather data or information about whether the project or policy helped, changed or alleviated a problem. Keep reporting the information to the Secretary of Transportation and the project team, update Web pages and consider sending a follow-up press release.

Event Planning Checklist

☐ Communication plans – for project, event and media.

☐ Secure date and put on Sharepoint.

☐ Invite list – show who was invited and why. Were they invited to speak? Who contacted them and if they RSVP'd or not. Run your list by Elissa Hicks in HQ to make sure you didn't forget any elected officials.

☐ Invitations.

☐ Site selection – take photos and sketch the site for the location of the tent, parking, etc.

☐ Bios – Google the dignitaries and print photo biographies of those attending.

☐ Script – write out exactly how the event will go. Who speaks first, which way the Secretary of Transportation directs the crowd for the photo op, etc.

☐ Talking points – for Governor, Secretary of Transportation, Regional Administrator, WSP and project engineer.

☐ Sign-in sheet – be able to tell executives just before event begins if all speakers/dignitaries arrived.

☐ Photo-op list – call out who will be in first photo, second, etc.

☐ Name tags for all attendees.

☐ Seat assignments – VIP chairs (speakers, dignitaries around podium) should all be clearly marked with names and titles; leave chair empty if they don't show and the Secretary of Transportation or emcee will say, "Representative Robust was scheduled to attend but must have had a conflict or is stuck in traffic …"

☐ Clean shovels – order at least a dozen each season and donate to maintenance at the end of the year. Shovels need to be clean for each event.

☐ Ribbon and scissors.

☐ Hard hats and vests – for photo ops vests should be provided for all; hard hats are not necessary but have on hand just in case.

☐ Media plan.

☐ Media kit.

☐ Media advisory.

☐ Post-event news release with approved Secretary of Transportation quote.

☐ Folio or program.

☐ Porta-potties.

☐ Tent.

☐ Audio and visual equipment and technician.

☐ Photographer.

☐ Refreshments.

☐ Parking for Secretary of Transportation, Regional Administrator, WSP Chief and Governor.

☐ Personal protection equipment.

☐ Secure project of the week slot with Headquarters.

Tips

- Don’t only plan ahead, but OVER plan. No detail is too small.
- A day or so before the event, schedule 30 minutes face-to-face with the Secretary of Transportation. Bring with you:
  - Invite list with RSVPs noted.
  - Biographies of dignitaries with photos.
  - Site plan.
  - Script.
  - Secretary of Transportation’s talking points – include how many projects completed year-to-date and how many are under construction.
  - Remind to WEAR HER BOOTS!
  - Be flexible – if the Secretary of Transportation or an executive changes anything prior to or at your event, view it as an improvement.
  - Assign team-members responsibilities at events such as media, welcome table, photo-op structure, executive-monitoring, etc.

Washington State
Department of Transportation

I, ______________________________ , confirm that I have read the
(Your name here)
guidelines and standards contained within the Communications Manual.

I understand the importance of these guidelines and standards and agree to strive to meet these standards for WSDOT in the position of

____ .
(Your position here)

I acknowledge the importance of communications as it pertains to WSDOT's relationship with the public. I agree to support the OneDOT brand to understand, advance and promote the three key elements of our mantra – project delivery, accountability and communications.

In the event I am unclear about how I and my work relate to the communications standards in this manual, I will contact my supervisor or the WSDOT Director of Communications for further clarity.

Signed: ____

Date: ____

Mail to: Lloyd Brown, MS 47322